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MIKE SHAYNE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE



SEPTEMBER, 1970
VOL. 27, NO. 4

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

TRIPLE CROSS AT HOLY CROSS

by **BRETT HALLIDAY**

Somewhere on that doomed ship a hidden killer had laid his plans to send everyone aboard to certain death. Could Mike Shayne trap and bring him to justice—while there still was time to save his own life?

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MIKE SHAYNE is at his Hardest-Hitting best in

TRIPLE CROSS AT HOLY CROSS

Gripping **NEW** Short Novel by

BRETT HALLIDAY

She was a ship of doom, sailing toward certain destruction. On her Mike Shayne still sought desperately to find the traitor who was sending them to death—before it was too late . . .



FOR AN ANCIENT and neglected tub the fishing trawler moved with a sort of labored dignity across the glassy surface of the sea. The long oily swells of the Gulf Stream were well astern now, and the ship moved in the crystal-clear waters of the Great Bahama Bank. Schools of fish moved lazily out of her path, and the long torpedo shapes of sharks cruised hopefully in her wake.

Michael Shayne squatted on the

weathered planking forward of the deckhouse and tried to look busy rigging handlines. The rest of the crew were asleep in the cramped quarters below decks except for Theodore, the black engineer, tending his diesels under the after hatch.

Captain Brogan and his mate, Gonzalez were in the wheelhouse talking.

They faced forward. Even at twenty feet distance and through the glass of the wheel house win-



dow Shayne could amuse himself by reading their lips. It was an art the big redhead had studied years before as something useful to his trade. On occasion it had saved his life.

"This would be a great day for it," the captain was saying.

"*Para que?*" Gonzalez asked.

Shayne's Spanish wasn't good, but he could follow it a little.

"For killing that big redheaded

son — out there," Brogan said. "The general thinks he's a spy of some sort. You know that. The easiest thing is kill him and get a bonus for doing it."

"If you shoot him the crew will hear," the mate objected.

"Who said anything about shooting? I wouldn't waste a bullet on the big fink. Call him over here and I'll sap him down. Then we toss him to the sharks back there. Nothing simpler, wouldn't you say?"

Shayne tied on another hook and tried to look peaceful and innocent, but his mind was racing. The detective wore no gun. He was dressed for his part of deckhand in worn and patched khaki shirt and pants and canvas sneakers. Like most fishermen he wore a sheath knife at his belt, but it wouldn't be much use against two men, at least one of whom had a gun within easy reach.

Of course he could rouse the three other crewmen below decks, but he didn't think that would help much. They were a rough lot at best, and would be inclined to side with their skipper against a stranger who might or might not represent the law.

He decided to trust to his own wits and the 'edge' his lip-reading had given him. He waited.

There was a brief discussion between the two men, but their heads were turned away from Shayne and he couldn't make out what it was all about.

Then the mate stuck his head out the wheelhouse door and motioned Shayne to come aft. The big detective took his time getting to his feet and shambling aft. He still hadn't a plan of action of his own.

The captain had lashed the wheel, and both he and the mate came out on deck.

"There's something fouled to our side over the rail there," Brogan said and pointed. "Take a look and see if you can free it."

Shayne didn't take his eyes off the man's face. He knew that, once he bent to look over the rail, he'd be slugged and thrown into the sea.

"Sorry, Cap," he said.

"What do you mean, sorry?" Brogan yelled. "When I give an order on this boat, you obey it."

"I can read lips," Shayne said.

The captain was already reaching for the hip pocket where he kept a leather-bound blackjack. When Shayne spoke he hesitated in sudden surprise.

As he did, the big detective hit him, taking advantage of the moment of surprise. It was a looping right, swung from almost down to the knee.

To Shayne's surprise the captain didn't resist any more than a clothing dummy would have done. He twisted to his right and hit the deck with his shoulder with none of the resistance a fighting man normally gives when taken by surprise. Then he tilted further over and stretched face down on the deck.

Shayne saw why it had been that easy. A bone handled sheath knife had gone into Brogan's back and broken the spine in the instant before he was struck.

"Okay, senior," the mate said. "So you have a friend you didn't know about. Isn't that a pleasant thing to find out?"

Gonzalez leaned over and pulled his knife out of the corpse's back and wiped it on the man's shirt. He took the captain's wallet and keys, and the blackjack itself to boot.

"Come on now," he said to Shayne. "You don't want me to think an agent of the great American government is stupid, do you? Help me throw this meat to the fish before it bleeds all over the deck. Hurry while we are alone."

Gonzalez took the dead captain's arms and Shayne grabbed the feet and they swung the body overside. There was a flurry of bloody foam when the sharks closed in, but it rapidly fell astern.

"Okay, mister F.B.I.," Gonzalez said then. "What do we do next? Do you call up your Coast Guard cutter?"

"Just who do you think I am?" Shayne asked.

Gonzalez gave him a long look, then motioned him into the wheel house. The swarthy mate took the wheel, but held the course steady as it went.

"The late master of this vessel thought you were a spy of El Jefe," he said. "Considering the sort of



games our dear general is playing I thought that a bit naive of him. I realized that you had to be a spy for the C.I.A. or the F.B.I. instead, and so I took issue when he wanted to kill you out of hand. In view of the difficulty of changing the alleged mind of such a stubborn fellow, I decided to—uh—cut the Gordian knot, as it were." He paused.

"Your English is improving," Shayne said.

"That's just when we're alone," Luis Gonzalez said. "I'm a Harvard graduate, but I don't think the rest of the crew would approve. But you're changing the subject again, Mr. Shayne. You haven't told me who you really represent."

"I'm not at liberty to say," Shayne told him. "Certainly not till I know where you stand yourself. I'm sure you must realize that."

"I stand in my own shoes," Gonzalez said. "As a man of the world you must realize that. However, I

just saved your life, so you know I'm not El Jefe's man. Neither do I particularly admire the general. Let's just say that, aside from acquiring some millions of American dollars, my great ambition is to see my beloved island free once more—and of course my family estates back in the hands of their rightful owner."

"That's plain enough," Shayne said. "Besides I owe you a life—or do I? Anyway suppose for now I just accept you as the new captain of the *Amador*."

The slender, wiry man at the wheel kept his back to Shayne and his eyes out over the shimmering surface of the sea as he thought things over. Shayne waited patiently. At last Luis Gonzalez spoke.

"I deplore your lack of confidence," he said. "You know you really haven't told me anything as yet. However I suppose you've your reasons, maybe your orders. Let it rest that you and I can be of use to each other if we will. I have no desire to offend whoever your principals are in Washington. I suppose they are in Washington? If I seem to do so, Senor Shane, tell me as one reasonable man to another."

"That seems fair enough," Shayne said. "At least I can tell you one thing. The captain was right. I don't work for the general. And I don't have any reason not to work with you as long as this ship stays on her scheduled course. So far I'll be your man."

"As long as you are, there'll be no trouble. What will you tell the crew when they come up on deck?"

Shayne laughed. "I guess I'll just tell them the truth. The captain leaned too far over the side and slipped. Sharks ate him before we could come about."

"That will do. They won't mourn him. Nor will we. You and I, we will remember him. Just in case you are El Jefe's man or should wish to take my place, we will remember Captain Brogan."

"That's right, Captain Gonzalez," Shayne said. "You and I can keep our memories." He went forward and began to rig hand lines again just as if nothing had happened.

He looked like any professional fisherman working his trade, but under the thatch of red hair one of the keenest minds in the detective business was hard at work.

II

FOR MIKE SHAYNE the case had begun ten days before in the library of a Mizner-designed palace looking out over green lawns and the white sands of Palm Beach to the sea. Deferential servants had brought him fine brandy in a glass as fragile and as beautiful as a bubble, and he and his host had exhausted the sonorous and honorific preliminaries to serious conversation.

"Your life will be in danger if you work for me," the white-haired aristocrat had said. "On the other

hand, Mr. Shayne, I'm prepared to pay generously, and more than generously for the risks you will take. Moreover, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you will be saving a life—perhaps many lives—and that they will be lives that someday may bring security and happiness to a whole nation of people."

"If it wasn't for that thought I wouldn't be here at all," Shayne said. "I'm not a James Bond or a gun runner, and in spite of what you may have heard, I operate within the law."

"My sources of information have assured me of that," Senator de Leon said pleasantly. "They are very good sources, some of them in high places within your own government, and I believe them. Otherwise we would not be talking. Your mission will be not only dangerous but extremely delicate. You will be tempted as well as threatened, for the stakes are very high indeed. I needed a man on whose intelligence, courage, discretion and integrity I could count. Such men are rare indeed, but your name was given me and vouched for."

"I'm honored," Shayne said. "I just hope I haven't been over-rated to you. I've never thought of myself as a superman."

"Neither do we," the old man said. "Supermen are only in legend, and no man is a legend while he lives. Instead we think of you very simply as a man who gets things

done. At the moment that is the sort of man that we need above everything else. Make yourself comfortable, and I'll explain."

De Leon pushed the bottle of brandy towards Shayne, but the big redhead shoved it away and shook his head. The senator—he had been this and cabinet minister and once vice-president in his own island republic—seemed pleased.

"A man like yourself is called in time of trouble," he said. "If it's something we can handle ourselves, we don't need you. So when we do, we need you very badly indeed. I'm sure you realize that as well as we do. It's true. Right now we face a problem that calls for a man of your particular skills and abilities. It's important for all of us in the exile community, and even more so for me personally. Right this moment there's a life at stake which I value even more than my own, if that can be possible."

"Now we get down to cases," Shayne said simply.

"Exactly, Now we get down to cases. My grandson's case, to be specific."

"You want me to bodyguard him?" the detective asked.

The old man sipped his brandy. "In a sense yes, Mr. Shayne. In another sense a great deal more than just bodyguard. I want you to find and remove a particular danger which I believe threatens him, as I believe it has threatened and destroyed others of our finest young

men in the past. Unfortunately I cannot tell you exactly what that danger is. It will be part of your job to find out. That is why we need a very exceptional man such as we believe you to be."

"You must have some idea," Shayne said. "Something you can give me to start with. Otherwise you wouldn't say a particular danger."

"Our young men are no different from yours," the senator said. "They are, above all, impatient. They want to restore the old regime in our country and remove the communist administration. We older people have the patience to wait, to move slowly, to let time fight for us. The young bravos do not. They are continually making plans, mounting raids and expeditions and striking ill prepared and ill-advised blows."

"I can understand that," Shayne said.

"So can we. If this was all we could accept their impatience and its consequent hazards. A boy is a boy. Nothing can be done to change the nature of either."

"But this is not all. There are men among us who encourage the most reckless youth. For their own ends they organize, arm and mount the raids. In particular there is General Blanco. He's a flamboyant man, a type to fire the imagination of youth. He sends many of what he calls special commando groups."

"I've heard of him," Shayne said.

"Wasn't he behind the raids on provincial branch banks?"

"Oh, yes. Also the attempt to cut out the naval revenue cutter and other dramatic incidents. Our young men fight among themselves to join his organization."

"That seems natural enough, sir."

"Natural, yes, Mr. Shayne. If there was not the general for bell-ram, there would be another. What is not quite so natural is the way the best young men are taken to die. The natural leaders are recruited and do not come back."

"I'd think that was natural also," Shayne said. "In any war the bravest and best men take the greatest risks."

"We've thought of that. It's easy to give credit to Fate until your own family is concerned. Then we think again and more carefully. In a word, there are some of us who feel the losses have been too—perhaps selective is the word—to be due to chance alone. There are some who wonder about the flamboyant general and the scale at which he lives."

"You want me to prove he's a traitor?"

"We want the truth about him, Mr. Shayne, whatever that may be. And I want my grandson Carlo to come back alive. We will pay you twenty thousand American dollars for the truth about the general. I will double that amount if my grandson returns safely from the raid for which he has enlisted. In addition we will place you on a

vessel engaged in the operation and provide money for all expenses, including any bribes you may need to pay. We'll help you in any other way we can."

Shayne looked out across the luxuriantly landscaped grounds of the great estate. For a moment one big hand came up to tug at his earlobe as he thought. Then he held out his hand to clasp the senator's.

"It's a deal," the redhead said.

III.

THE FISHING trawler *Amador* on which Mike Shayne found himself employed was apparently a key link in the general's commando operations. Most of the time it cruised and fished and returned to port like any other boat of its class working out of Miami.

That was the official cover under which it came and went from the South Florida ports, the far flung Bahamas and the islands south and east. Its real mission, Shayne had been told, was quite another matter indeed. He was about to find out.

The four man crew accepted the disappearance of Captain Brogan and the informal promotion of Luis Gonzalez with a lack of open comment which would have alerted the detective to the nature of the voyage even if he hadn't already been prepared.

Since Shayne had been on deck when the captain vanished, and so had presumably been a part of the



action, he found himself informally acknowledged as a sort of second in command. In other words nobody argued with him about anything from that point on.

In the case of the three deckhands this didn't surprise him. They were ordinary waterfront toughs, dangerous enough at a man's back in an alley but not the sort to care what went on as long as their pay was regular.

The black engineer, Theodore, was something else again. The man was an educated Jamaican and, like Luis Gonzalez himself, apparently a cut above the ordinary fishing hand. He stood a good six-four in his bare feet with massive thigh and shoulder muscles and a grave and thoughtful face.

That night they fished at the edge

of Great Bahama bank where the sea floor fell off over sheer underwater cliffs to the great channel through which the Gulf Stream poured northward. By day the drop-off was clearly visible through the crystal clear water and small fish could be seen darting about the coral heads and streaming weed until visibility was lost in the blue-green deeps.

At night it was another matter entirely. Big and voracious fish came up out of the deep water to strike savagely at any bait offered. Shayne's line would hardly strike the water before it was taken by a hungry monster. Within an hour even his strong muscles were aching.

Fortunately for Shayne the crew wasn't too serious about the fishing. Obviously they knew it was just a cover for the real object of the trip. By ten-thirty all of them had coiled their lines and were sitting swapping jokes and smoking on the decks.

At eleven Theodore went below and began to warm up the powerful diesel engines. The *Amador* was anchored to the bank itself where the stern swung out over the drop-off. No effort was made as yet to raise the anchor. Everyone just waited.

Gonzalez called Mike Shayne into the wheelhouse and gave him a loaded forty-five automatic and a short, lead weighted oak billy-club used to stun or kill big fish.

"The heroes are due to arrive

any time now," he told Shayne. "This is your first trip so I'd better explain what we do. As acting mate of this galleon, you're equally responsible with me for seeing that it's done."

"Do I shoot 'em or club 'em first?" Shayne said with a laugh. "What is this? I thought we were all on the same side in this deal."

"We hope we are," Gonzalez said. "We do hope so. You wouldn't want us to make a mistake like Captain Brogan did, now would you? So we are careful men. That way we live longer. Maybe not much longer, but anyway some."

"Okay," Shayne said. "I'm careful."

"Good. It is what we want. Si? Los voluntarios are young and excitable. They don't understand discipline. You and I, we teach them.

"They've been told not to bring any personal weapons with them, that they'll be armed at the staging point. Some don't believe it. Some just forget. So we search them. They come aboard one at a time and you or I personally do the search. Baggage comes up separately and we search that before it's given back to them. Pick out anything at all that could be a weapon, even heavy belt buckles. You understand?"

Shayne did.

The men arrived in three fast launches which homed in on the *Amador* from different directions within a few minutes of each other after an exchange of blinker signals

and passwords with the trawler.

Luis Gonzalez had the men put down a gangway so that the launches could unload one at a time. The men were young, eager and talkative. These were real idealists who would fight for a cause. Only the men who ran the launches had the hardened faces of real mercenaries. They took their craft away as fast as each one was emptied of its human freight.

Gonzalez had been right. Of the twenty-two men who came aboard no fewer than ten had pistols either about their person or in the G.I. barracks bag which held their clothing and personal possessions. All but one had either a sheath of a clasp knife big enough to kill a man. That one had a Thompson machine gun in his bag. Three others had personal sporting rifles.

Luis Gonzalez lectured the men in both Spanish and English—the latter, Shayne suspected, mostly for his benefit. He told them their weapons would be given back before they went into action, but that aboard the *Amador* only the crew went armed. They didn't seem to like what he said, but nobody talked back.

Shayne had spotted Carlos de Leon from photos the old senator had shown him in Palm Beach. He had come aboard from the last launch to arrive. He'd had a .38 special revolver in a belt holster and looked as if he knew how to

use it. Shayne put it on the pile with the rest.

The boy had an intelligent look that the big private eye approved. He kept his mouth shut instead of jabbering needlessly like most of his friends, and carried himself with the look of a born leader. Shayne felt himself beginning to like young Carlos before they'd exchanged a word.

He couldn't say as much for some of the others. They were a restless lot, impatient to rush into dangers they apparently had no understanding of. El Jefe's pros would eat this bunch for breakfast.

As a group they'd be brave enough, but undisciplined, touchy and proud to a point where they could fight among themselves and be more danger to each other than to the enemy. Until they'd had a considerable course of training these boys would be a lot better off without personal weapons.

As soon as the last launch slid away into the night the *Amador* was under weigh. This time the powerful engines were opened up wide, and the boat showed itself capable of speed far in excess of what would be expected from an ordinary fishing trawler.

Gonzalez kept her at full throttle and without running lights all through the hours of darkness in an effort to put as much distance as possible between himself and the rendezvous point. With the lightening of sky at dawn, he

throttled down to a more normal cruising speed in case of observation.

At this point also the young volunteers were made to go below. They didn't like it. The crew's own quarters were cramped and stuffy enough, but the young men had to go into the mostly empty cargo holds. The smell of fish, salt, bilge water and bait was overpowering and the ventilation totally inadequate. By the time the sun got well above the horizon the heat down there was intolerable.

There was muttering and then yells of protest from the open hatches. Gonzalez came out of the wheel-house and made another speech, yelling down into the open hatch.

"You all signed up to be heroes," he yelled down to them. "I didn't ask you to do that. The hero business begins right now, whether you like it or not. So shut up down there and smell fish and die of the heat. Only do it like heroes with your big, brave mouths shut."

A yell of defiance from a dozen throats was his answer.

"The first thing you learn about being heroes," he yelled back, "is that you can't stop once you start. The hero business smells sometimes. You get sick. You get mad. All those things. But you can't stop. Anybody wants to stop being a hero and stick his head up that hatch, I got two men here with clubs to break his head for him. He will

still be a hero, but his head will be broken. Okay?"

There was another yell from below.

"I have reasons for this," Gonzalez called them. "There are planes that go over so high we don't hear them. We don't see them. But they see us and take pictures. If they see too many men on deck they know we aren't fishermen, we are heroes. Then the plane comes down and drops a bomb. Or maybe a patrol boat comes to take heroes to the Castle for questioning. I don't think you like that."

There was a confused babble of talk from below decks. Then a voice that Shayne thought he recognized as young Carlos' called up the hatch.

"You are right, *senor*. From now on we are heroes."

After that there was no more trouble. When darkness fell the engines were again opened up to full power thrust. At the same time the sick and exhausted volunteers were allowed up on deck. They lay about and panted as if there wasn't enough clean air in the sky to clear their lungs.

Just before dawn the *Amador* sighted an island like a long black smudge against the faintly lightening horizon. They had come some four hundred miles down the long chain of Bahamian islands since first picking up the recruits. Shortly after daybreak they steered for a long wooden pier where a couple

of other "fishing" craft were already tied up.

This time Gonzalez let the volunteers crowd the rail and gape and chatter as much as they pleased. The island was in Bahamian waters and so under the distant protection of the British flag. El Jefe's people probably knew perfectly well what went on here, but they wouldn't cause an international incident by a raid in force. At least they wouldn't for the time being.

Shayne had been thoroughly briefed by the senator's people as to what he would find. None the less he joined the young men at the rail. There's no real substitute for seeing for yourself.

Actually there wasn't very much to see. The island was only about six miles long by three or four wide, and as nearly as possible to be perfectly flat. The western shore had a straggle of mangroves over mud flats. To the east and south the beaches were sand and weathered coral. Inland there were belts of coconut palms, pines, trash-brush and a few mahoganies twisted by the endless winds.

The only man-made improvements were the pier and a huddle of unpainted wooden sheds and shacks a little way back in the pines. Shayne saw a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a pivot at the beach end of the dock, but there was no one near it to use it in case of surprise attack.



"A dozen men who knew their business could take this port in about five minutes flat," he said to Luis Gonzalez.

"My own idea exactly," the new captain said. "I keep wondering why El Jefe's boys haven't done it long ago. There's no other way for the men at the base camp to get off this place except by this dock and these boats. They could be scooped in before the Bahamian police could make a move."

"He knows it's here?" Shayne asked.

"Of a certainty he does. His planes go over every couple of days just to make sure."

"He's afraid of an international incident?"

"If it involved a real battle here, I'd say yes," Gonzalez nodded.

"This wouldn't cause that much fuss. In a couple of hours his boys could sweep the place clean and move out again. There wouldn't have to be any survivors to complain."

"You're going to some lengths to tell me you think he wants the place here," Shayne said, and lit a cigar. "Of course it's handy for him to watch and know what's going on all the time. To my notion it's too handy. Whoever advised the general should have picked a better spot. For instance one of the old abandoned World War Two airstrips in the Glades.

"A camp there would be perfectly safe from raids, easy to supply and close enough to the sea to launch fast raids from. I'd say it had plenty of advantages over this one."

"I'm no general of course," Gonzalez agreed, "I'm not known for *los talentos militares*, but even I see it your way. So I wonder why the general does not. Can it be, Mr. Shayne, that your people in Washington also wonder?"

Shayne saw his chance and took it.

"I can't speak for them," he said honestly, though he strongly suspected Gonzalez would not believe him. "For myself I do wonder. It might be to your advantage to help me settle these nagging doubts."

Gonzalez appeared to be thinking. Then he made up his mind. "Nothing easier. I shall speak with

Theodore and I'm sure that the need for a partial motor overhaul can hold us here for a few days. Of course you're not an engineer, so your presence will not be required during that time."

"I understand," Shayne said. "You can be assured that you will never have occasion to regret it."

By this time the *Amador* was almost up to the dock. A couple of barefoot men in ragged straw hats and soiled khaki uniform shirts and pants came slouching out to catch the lines and make her fast.

The volunteers were lined up at the rail, laughing, cheering, and eager to jump onto the dock. Gonzalez sent Shayne out to restrain them.

"Hold it boys," he said. "Line up properly now, and don't be in such a hurry. Somebody in command has to come out and take charge of you before you land. Otherwise things won't be all proper and military."

"Are you a soldier?" one of them asked. It was young Carlos de Leon.

"Not the way you mean," Shayne answered. "Let's just say I'm a man doing his job."

The young man drew him aside where the others couldn't overhear. "Some day I'll be interested in what that job really is," he said. "You're not a deckhand, I'm sure. I've half a notion my grandfather knows why you're here."

"If you think that," Shayne said, "then you're also smart enough to know he wouldn't want me to ad-

admit it. Of course I won't say you're right. Just let well enough alone, boy."

"Let sleeping dogs lie?" The youngster laughed. "Okay, sleepy dog. Okay, only don't lie to me too much."

"One thing's no lie," Shayne said. "I'm no enemy either to you or the cause you fight for. Maybe I'm not a friend, but I can promise you I'm no enemy either."

IV

THE PEOPLE ON shore certainly weren't as excited by the arrival of the *Amador* as were the young men on board. It was nearly half an hour before a car drove out of the pines and a man in a bush jacket and pith helmet and wearing a holstered pistol came out on the dock. He made a short speech in Spanish which Mike Shayne failed to follow and then disembarked the new men, loaded them with their baggage and marched them off.

At the shore end of the long dock he got back in the car and drove off with the men stumbling after him in the sand and dust.

"Who's that?" Shayne asked.

"He calls himself Captain George," Gonzalez answered him. "Claims he used to be an officer of United States Marines. He's one of the training officers here."

"I don't know anything about the Marines," Shayne said, "but the last time I saw that one he was a cap-

tain of bolita runners for a character calling himself El Grande in Miami."

"Do you think he recognized you?"

"I don't think he did or will. That type can seldom see past the rosy glow of their own self-importance. Anyway he didn't show any sign that he knew me. Who else is socially prominent around here?"

Gonzalez laughed again. "You use the term loosely, *amigo*. Actually as far as I know the permanent cadre around here is only fifteen or sixteen men and a few women. Four of the men are cooks and one's a car mechanic. Then there's three or four strong arm thugs who wear sergeant's stripes and maintain order with their fists. The rest call themselves officers."

"The *commandante* is Colonel Gomez. He's an Indio-Blanco-Chino mixture. I don't know what you call it in your language. Anyway he's a real mean, shifty type. Give him one thing though—he keeps command of these people."

"I'd think that would be hard as far as these young sprouts are concerned," Shayne said. "They're a proud and quarrelsome lot."

"Sure they are," Gonzalez said. "On the other hand they aren't here very long, and when they are he passes himself off as a professional soldier. They don't know the difference, of course, and it gives him enough prestige. They say any-

body bucks him either gets shipped out fast or has an accident."

"Convenient," Shayne said. "Very convenient, I'd say. Does the good colonel ever command any of the raids?"

"That's the funny part of it," Luis said. "Once in a while he does, and they are the successful raids. At least twice he's done real damage to the other side and got clean off with his men. That's one reason the responsible people back of him in Florida have never checked into him too closely. As you Yankees say, nothing succeeds like success."

"So they say. Anyone else I should know about in advance?"

"One, I think. But you'd decide that for yourself anyhow La Antorcha, the torch, the red-headed woman who whips these boys up to a fever pitch. She's supposed to have fought against El Jefe in the revolution. Myself, I don't know about that. Anyway she's a whole lot of woman. You'll see for yourself soon enough."

"I guess I will. One thing more. Who orders the raids and plans them? Who decides which men are going?"

"The way they say here Colonel Gomez plans the raids most of the time and the general has to okay them before they go. Once in a while the general orders a particular objective and lets the colonel work out the details. That's when something really important is in the wind. On the other hand—"

"Yes?"

"From the way some of these raids get clobbered—well, it's almost as if El Jefe had planned them himself. It's just a thought, Mr. Shayne. Just a thought."

Shayne refrained from telling him that Senator de Leon had already had the same thought.

In the late afternoon, when a westering sun cast long shadows from the pines, the big detective went ashore. He carried a message from Gonzalez that unexpected engine trouble would keep the *Amador* tied up for a couple of days. That gave him an excuse to go over to headquarters.

In his khaki shirt and slacks, with a sailor's peaked cap pulled down over his brow and a four day stubble of beard, the detective wasn't worried about being recognized. He had his sheath knife at his broad leather belt and a two-shot .44 rim-fire derringer strapped to the calf of his right leg in case of trouble, but the last thing he was looking for was a fight.

The two men who'd helped tie up the *Amador* were apparently the only permanent wharf guard. They were drinking rum and boiling salt codfish over a gasoline stove inside one of the shacks. The waters around the dock swarmed with fresh fish for the catching, but they hadn't wanted to take the trouble.

A couple of the larger sheds were piled with boxes and crates of supplies. Shayne didn't want to appear

too interested, but he noticed a case of Springfield rifles that had been broken open. Probably the wharf tenders had been ordered to remove the cosmoline grease with which the guns were smeared as a halfhearted start had been made on three or four guns. That was all.

The men gave Shayne only a casual glance as he passed. He went on up the narrow rut that made a hot, windless tunnel through the pines. Walking was hard in the loose sand, and mosquitos came out to sample his blood. After a while sand and dust caked in his sweat to provide a partial relief from the bugs.

Headquarters was about a mile from the dock and on the island's highest ground, possibly ten or twelve feet above flood-tide mark. The pines and scrub mahogany had been cleared out and the buildings fronted on a wide shallow pond that filled the center of the island.

Shayne saw at once that this had been originally an American fighter plane strip of World War Two vintage. There was even the remains of a concrete landing strip, broken in spots but still reasonably serviceable. The two dilapidated hangars were used for storage. Besides that there were ancient barracks, a headquarters building, and a mess hall from the chimneys of which smoke rose in a black column.

Somewhat to his surprise there was no guard posted in front of the colonel's office. When he rapped on

the door a quiet voice called out to him to come in.

The *commandante* was behind his desk in a theatrical white uniform with red and gold shoulder boards and a row of medal ribbons on the left breast of the unbuttoned blouse. He was an older man than Shayne had expected with the brown skin and high cheek bones of an Indian and the straight black hair and slightly almond eyes of an Oriental. There was the scar of an old knife cut on the right cheek, barely missing the eye, and his hands were square and powerful. Behind everything was an air of restrained malevolence that made Shayne think of a coiled snake.

The man looked Shayne over for a moment and then said, "Well. Who are you and what do you want?" in unaccented English.

"I'm the mate off the *Amador*," Shayne said. "Captain Gonzalez sent you this." He held out the note.

The colonel dropped the paper on the desk without reading it. "Ah, yes. Captain Gonzalez. What happened to Captain Brogan?"

"He fell overboard."

"Say sir when you speak to me, man. And don't ask me to believe fairy tales. An experienced sailor doesn't fall overboard on a calm day."

"This one did," Shayne said. He purposely omitted the sir. "I think he had a heart attack."

The *commandante* smiled without humor. "Oh yes, a heart attack.

Was this one possibly brought on by a bullet or the sharp point of a knife? You would be wise to tell me. I find out everything here sooner or later in any case."

Shayne gave him back glance for glance. "I don't know what you're talking about, Colonel."

"Well, no matter. It makes little difference how you kill yourself on your boats. If the general wants to know, let him appoint an admiral to find out. Now on this island, that's another matter. For every breath you take on shore you will answer to me and to no one else but me."

"I understand you, Colonel," Shayne said. "No heart attacks on dry land."

"You talk well for a fisherman," the colonel said. There was suddenly a flat, blue steel automatic pistol in his hand with the muzzle held rock steady at Shayne's stomach. "You talk too well for a fisherman, and you lack humility. Who are you?"

"I'm a man hired to run a boat."

"Don't play with me, big man. Suppose I pull this trigger, man? Who will regret it most besides yourself?"

Shayne put up one big hand and pushed the peaked cap back off his brow. "Why you will, Colonel," he said. "That's only a popgun you have there, a .32. I'm too big for it to stop. Shoot me with that and before I die I'll twist your head off with my hands and throw it out

the window. If you let a man my size get close to you, you should have a bigger gun."

"Why so I should," the colonel said. As deftly as he had produced the gun he put it out of sight again. "I won't underestimate you again, friend fisherman. Now go and tell your captain to make his repairs as quickly as he can. He may be needed before the week is out."

It was a dismissal, and Shayne turned away. He made himself take the three steps out of the door without looking back. At the threshold he paused.

"If I were you, Colonel," he said over his shoulder, "I might have shot me in the back just now."

"If you were me," the voice behind him said, "you would know why you are still alive. Be grateful that you are, and do not argue with your betters."

Shayne closed the door behind him. He was more concerned than he liked to admit.

The man called Captain George was coming up the walk as Shayne left. They looked at each other without interest and without any sign of recognition. The officer was smoking, and the big redhead caught a reek of marijuana as they passed.

He decided to stay at the post for the evening meal. Food should bring everyone out where he could get a look at them. While he waited for the agitation in the kitchens to

reach a climax, he looked the place over.

There were more cases of arms and munitions inside the hangar-warehouses He could identify rifles, revolvers, machine pistols and light machine guns. There were even three cases of bazooka shells. There were metal drums of water, gasoline and oil; crates of canned and bottled foods, sacks of rice and white flour, and of other things he didn't bother to identify. In spite of its generally rundown look this camp had enough supplies to outfit a fair sized army. Somebody had had a lot of money to spend and had done so with a free hand.

This could be the base for something more important than hit and run commando raids. The detective began to wonder why it hadn't been of what it might eventually become.

Eventually a man in undershirt and white drill pants came out of the kitchen and carried a loaded tray of food over to the commandante's quarters. On his return empty-handed he began to beat on one of the galvanized metal garbage cans with the handle of a mop.

That brought everyone out of cover and over to the mess hall in straggling groups Shayne noted that only one man ignored the clatter. He was the first sentry the detective had seen, a lean, hatchet-faced professional with a machine pistol cradled in the crook of his arm, and he was guarding a small building which was obviously the radio



shack. Shayne made a mental note of the fact.

Inside the mess hall, Shayne was given a metal tray, knife, fork and spoon and took his place in line. Unlike the United States Army no K.P.'s served the food. Instead everyone helped himself from the trays and pots lined up in a row. The food was hot and plentiful, though indifferently cooked. Shayne piled his plate with stewed chicken, rice, black beans, fried plantain and fresh baked bread and took a tin cup of strong black coffee.

The officers, except for the col-

onel, who ate in his quarters, had a table to themselves at the head of the room. Two women ate with them.

Other women ate at the men's tables. Whether they were wives or camp followers, Shayne couldn't tell. The professional soldiers, half a dozen of them, ate together. These were a hardbitten lot and easy to spot. Any one of the would give a good account of himself in a fight. The rest appeared to be a ragtag lot like the two at the dock. If trouble started, they'd likely take to the woods without putting up any real sort of fight.

There were three men at the officer's table besides Captain George. One was a dark, hard-faced mercenary type; the second, fat and sweating, was probably the technical or ordinance specialist. The third was a young fellow in a white jacket, certainly the medic for the camp. His black-haired young wife sat beside him and ate with nervous haste.

The other woman had her back to Shayne. Masses of naturally red hair fell to her shoulders which curved ripely above a thin white blouse. She was obviously courted by the men and dominated the conversation. This must be La Antorcha, the Torch, about whom Luis Gonzalez had spoken.

The new recruits had a table to themselves off to the side of the messhall. For the most part they ate without much talk. Shayne

noted that their civilian clothes had been replaced by khaki shirts and pants. Whether or not their personal weapons had been returned he didn't know, but none of them wore arms.

As the men finished eating they took their empty dishes to the rear of the hall and went out, all but the officers and recruits. Shayne figured some sort of ceremony of welcome for the latter was coming up after the meal. Wanting to stay as inconspicuous as possible, he decided to leave before it started.

Evidently La Antorcha decided to do the same. He could hear her walking behind him to the door. He scraped his plate of leavings into one barrel, and dropped it into another filled with water, and stepped out into the twilight.

"Wait for me," said a feminine voice at his back. It was familiar and he turned, not knowing what to expect.

"It's okay, Mike," the voice said in an amused tone. "I spotted you right away in the chow line. If I'd wanted to blow the whistle I'd have done it right then."

Shayne relaxed and let himself grin at her.

"Hello, Annie," he said. "What are we both doing here?"

"You've got to be either on a job or on the lam, shamus," she said. "As long as it's not tailing me, I don't care which. As for me, this is better than Big Bennie's Beef House any way you look at it. The

work's easy, there ain't any competition, and for the first time in my life I call all the shots. You ain't here to spoil all that for me, are you, Mike?"

"No," Shayne said. "Honest, Ann, my being here's got nothing at all to do with you. I can tell you that much and not stretch the truth one bit."

He remembered the woman well enough from Miami. A few years ago she'd been a singer in the cheaper night spots, lately a singing waitress or a cocktail bar hostess in the season. She was well up in the forties, but still with natural red hair, a flashing smile, an unspoiled big-breasted, big-hipped figure and a quality of vibrant sexuality.

"What is your racket here?" he asked.

She patted his shoulder with one warm hand and laughed.

"You might say it's the same as it always was," she said. "Just call me happiness on the hoof. I keep the new boys all pepped up by singing and dancing for them. I let the officers remember what the world outside had to offer. Mostly I just spread around here like sunshine to brighten everything up."

"With a uniform," Shayne said, "you'd be morale officer. In a way you are anyway."

They kept walking along the edge of the dark pine woods. The last crimson shafts of sunset had faded and night came down like a hot, warm blanket of dark on the camp.

"Who would have guessed it back in Miami?" she said as they walked. "Big Annie Riker, never out of a night spot, living on an island at the back door to no place and liking it. Actually liking it, Mike."

"That sounds like your heart was in it someplace," Shayne said, "and since this is a one-man post, that must mean the colonel. Am I right?"

"I could say it was none of your business," she said, "except you'd find out anyway. In this place everybody knows everything. So who cares? Yes I'm the colonel's girl, and not just because he's top banana. There is a real man, Mike. You'll like him if you get to know him."

She paused. "You aren't after my Al, are you, Mike? That wasn't what brought you here? Because if it was—"

Shayne said honestly enough, "He wasn't named a target, Annie. I hope he doesn't make himself one. I really do."

"I'd like to believe you, Mike. I would now. Usually you play for the good guys if I remember right. And Al Gomez is a good guy. You can take it from one who knows."

The knife came out of nowhere in particular, flung with enough force to sink its point two inches into a pine, and passed between their two faces so close they both felt the wind of its passing.

Shayne pulled her down on the ground and got the derringer out of

the small holster strapped to his leg. She had sense enough to lie perfectly still. The big man moved silently on the sand and pine needles in his rubber soled deck shoes. He made a swift circuit in the dark, but found no one.

Shayne moved back and sat down beside the woman.

"Somebody doesn't like you, Mike," she said in low tones.

"Somebody doesn't like one of us for sure," he said. He held out the knife he'd pulled from the pine trunk.

She ran her hands over the knife and examined it as well as she could in the dark.

"There's a thousand of these in the hangar," she said. "American Marines survival knives. We give them out for standard issue."

"We'll just figure somebody issued this one to me," Shayne said. He stuck it in his belt. "Now I think we better get back in the light."

"Mike," she said, "you could have been right. That knife might have hit either one of us, the way it was thrown."

"It might," Shayne said, "but something tells me it was meant for me. I'd appreciate anything you can find out. Unless of course—"

"Unless nothing" she said. "Colonel Gomez wouldn't send a knife thrower. You don't know him, Mike. That one's all man. He does his own killing. Believe me."

"I'd like to," Shayne said.

Actually he was inclined to agree with her. The colonel wouldn't have to sneak around in the dark or have somebody do it for him. He commanded on the island and could have a stranger openly shot by a firing squad with or without trial.

The most serious thing was that somebody already felt he had reason to want Shayne dead. It didn't speak well for the success of his mission.

V

LESS THAN twenty-four hours after the knife throwing incident Mike Shayne was out on the blue water again with none of his immediate problems resolved. The *Amador* was still tied up at the ramshackle pier with Theodore working—or pretending to work—over the diesels.

Luis Gonzalez had been drafted to skipper one of the launches tied to the dock when the *Amador* had come in, and had picked Shayne to go with him at the latter's request. Another launch was along with its own skipper and mate. Both were loaded with the new recruits Gonzalez had brought over less than forty-eight hours before. They were uniformed now, armed to the teeth, and full of the thoughtless enthusiasm of young men who have never actually been under fire.

All of the previous morning there had been activity in and about the

guarded radio shack. At one point Colonel Gomez himself had driven out the communications officer and taken over personal operation of the set.

When he came out his face bore an expression of even more grim ferocity than usual. Subordinates scurried to get out of his path. Orders were issued that the recruits be given a rapid cram course in weapons handling.

Shortly after that Gonzalez and the other launch commander were hastily summoned to headquarters. On emerging Gonzalez picked up Shayne outside the mess hall, where he was waiting for the call to dinner.

"It's a raid," he said as soon as they were alone. "One of the launch skippers is on the mainland, so I'm to take out his craft and you're to go along."

"Why me?" Shayne asked. "I didn't enlist in this war. I thought I was just a deck hand."

"Colonel Gomez doesn't think so," Gonzalez said. "He told me to take you. Besides there's a good cash bonus and we don't have to actually land and fight. We just put them ashore. After they fight, they go up in the hills to join the guerilla bands. Anyway you don't look like a coward to me."

"Thanks," Shayne said. "Just as long as I don't start looking like a hero. I'd hate to have that happen. Who does fight this time? Not those kids! They're so green it would be murder."



"Sure. Sure it will be," Gonzalez agreed. "Who else has Gomez got to send? They're supposed to link up with a regular band before they reach the objective, though. Maybe they'll keep the boys out of trouble."

The cook came out and banged his dishpan at that point. "I hear you're taking the young warriors to Santa Cruz tonight," he said as they passed him. "Unlucky young men," he laughed.

"There goes nothing," Gonzalez said. "Colonel Gomez gave me the

destination as top secret and that dishpan jockey has it already. I don't like it."

"Neither do I," Shayne agreed. "What is Santa Cruz?"

"El Ciudad de Santa Cruz—Holy Cross City in U.S.A. talk. Actually it's not the city but the new hydraulic power plant on the river where it comes down out of the hills a couple of miles inshore that they're supposed to hit. The general thinks he has intelligence reports that it'll be lightly guarded for a couple of nights, for some reason. That's what all the hurry is about. In and out while nobody's watching the store so to speak. The colonel don't like it though."

"He doesn't?" Shayne was interested. "What did he say?"

"Not so much what he say," Gonzalez said through a mouthful of black beans and rice. "It's more what he don't say and how he don't say it. I don't think he like the raid. I think he try to get it called off, but the general order they go all the same. If they get that power plant, it be big feather in general's cap for sure."

"And if they don't—"

"I guess maybe the general thinks there's plenty more kids where this bunch comes from. Hurry up now and eat. We got to get down to the dock. I never took out this launch before and I want to see what she's like before I risk my neck in her."

Shayne would have liked a word

with Ann Riker before he left, but she hadn't come into the mess hall before he and Gonzalez left and he couldn't think of a valid excuse to go looking for her. The big detective still wasn't sure how far, if at all, he could trust Gonzalez. He kept remembering the knife in Captain Brogan's back and the other that had narrowly missed his own throat the night before.

Down at the dock they found Theodore already tuning up the launch's motors and forcing the two dock guards to fill fuel and water tanks from five gallon tins.

"She's a good boat, gent'men," the big black said in his deep, almost melodious voice. "She dance rings round those old cutters El Jefe got, special when you figures what dirty, sloppy engineers they got! I look you her over good. She run you there an' fly you back when Theodore finish with her."

"Run us where?" Shayne said.

"Santa Cruz, Mr. Shayne, Santa Cruz. This one run you into harbor or fountain in Cathedral Plaza, whichever you like."

Gonzalez laughed. "Into Holy Fountain, eh. That's a good one. We don't plan to go quite so close, though. Not tonight."

"Some other night, then, Cap," the black said. "Any old night as good as any other for that, I guess." His laughter boomed out as he bent over the engines again.

Just before dark the volunteers came down the road in column of

twos. Ten of them, including young de Leon and Lieutenant Reyes of the colonel's group, piled into the *Pelicano* with Mike Shayne and Luis Gonzalez. Ten more with a hard-bitten professional sergeant were to go in the other launch. To avoid observation the two boats were to separate and rendezvous again at the landing beach.

The island was some five hundred miles from Nassau at the south-eastern tip of the far flung Bahamian archipelago, so they were only a short run from their target. The *Pelicano*, as Theodore had predicted, fairly skimmed across the long swells.

Whatever else Luis Gonzalez might be, he was a fine skipper and a competent navigator by compass or stars. The recruits huddled below the thwarts to keep themselves and their weapons dry and talked in low tones. They were armed to the teeth with pistols, machetes and late model machine pistols or sub-machine guns. One or two even carried a favorite sporting weapon in addition. Their belts and bandoliers were full of ammunition and hung with hand grenades.

"They got the fire power a regiment used to have," Luis said to Mike Shayne, "and the sweet, innocent minds of so many babies. If a porpoise or a shark show up near us they're liable to panic and blow up the whole ocean. We better hope nothing scares them."

"What chance would they have

against El Jefe's men?" Shayne asked.

"Tonight? Untrained? Against a militia squad maybe a little bit of a chance. Not much. Against regulars nothing, nothing at all. They just commit suicide very bravely. Later on with training, experience and maybe some blooding those kids make the best soldiers in the world. But like they are now, I tell you, they're more danger to themselves than anyone else. You know."

"I know," Shayne said. "So why are they sent out tonight?"

"That's a good question," Gonzalez said in a low tone. "I been wondering when your great government in Washington, D.C., would get around to asking that question. Why do these nice, brave little boys get sent out to be murdered so much? They are plump little chickens for El Jefe's foxes to eat, so who is feeding the foxes and why? I am glad you are here, Mister American, to see for yourself."

"So what do we do?" Shayne said. "Just deliver the sheep—I mean chickens—to be slaughtered?"

"I think maybe we do not," Gonzalez said. "I don't really want all these nice boys to die. I want to make sure you don't die, Mister Washington, so your friends don't decide it is my fault. Most of all, if you like the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I don't want Luis Gonzalez to die. So we take what is called unex-

pected evasive action when the time comes."

Shayne was delighted. He'd been going over and over in his own mind what he could do to keep young Carlos de Leon from being caught in the trap, as the old senator had feared he would be. Actually Shayne hadn't been able to come up with any brilliant scheme. He couldn't countermand the colonel's orders, or the lieutenant's—or even Gonzalez' for that matter. He knew perfectly well he couldn't talk young Carlos into hanging back at the last minute. That would be betraying his sworn friends and comrades.

The best the redhead had been able to do so far in the way of a plan was to "help" Carlos over the side and contrive to sprain or break his ankle, or maybe knock him unconscious in the process. That way he could be kept off the actual landing beach whether he liked it or not. It wasn't much of a plan, but in the darkness and confusion Shayne just might be able to get away with it.

Now Gonzalez had obligingly taken the responsibility out of the detective's hands. All he had to do was let events take their course.

"What's your plan, Captain?" he asked.

"Simple enough," Gonzalez assured him. "We're supposed to put the heroes ashore in a little cove a couple of miles east of the City of Santa Cruz. It's a nice little place with a sand beach and trees

back of it to hide a landing from anyone on the highway. The hills come down close. A real nice place. It's just exactly where I'd expect heroes to come and get themselves killed.

"Now I don't dare refuse to go in, not with Lieutenant Reyes giving orders. These boys would think I was ruining the raid and shoot you and me quick so we couldn't stop them getting themselves killed all proper and according to orders. I can't just refuse or purposely stall to a point where they notice what I'm doing."

"I follow you so far," Shayne said.

"That's fine, mister U.S.A. super-spy," Luis Gonzalez said. "Also you and I both want to know if there is an ambush set. If the other boys get all safe ashore, these can go to, any may the Holy Mother guard and protect them. So I make a plan that cover everything."

"That's smart of you," Shayne said.

"Sure. Didn't I tell you I'm a Harvard graduate? Now this is what we do. There's another little beach about a quarter mile east of the real target. From the sea it looks the same. Easy for somebody like me to make a mistake. Nobody will notice till they get ashore. Only this one won't be guarded. It won't because it doesn't have to be. Back of it is swamp full of snakes, quick-sands, things like that. Nobody in his good mind would land people

there except some genius like me that doesn't want them to get inland. By the time we get that mistake straightened out we know if other beach is safe."

"Captain Gonzalez," Shayne said, "you're a genius, just like you say."

"Sure I am. You tell them in Washington?"

"I'll tell them in Washington."

The *Pelicano* ate up the miles at a steady clip. By a bit before midnight land was in sight, a low black wall to the south marked by the occasional lights of villages and small towns. The lighthouse at Santa Cruz harbor off to the west gave them a beacon to steer by, and the launch closed rapidly with the land.

"We haven't seen the lights of any naval patrols," Shayne said.

"I know," Gonzalez said. "I don't like it. On a quiet night like this they should be out, if only to keep the poor devils of fishermen from deserting to Florida."

A minute or two past midnight Gonzalez brought them into the shallow bay he was aiming at. The launch's motors were throttled down to low power that barely held her against the thrust of wind and wave.

The white-faced but determined heroes tumbled over the side into waist-deep water and stumbled ashore. Shayne noticed that Lieutenant Reyes stayed on board until he was sure no burst of firing greeted his men. Then he crossed himself and went into the water after them.

"Now we wait," Luis Gonzalez said. "It won't be long."

It wasn't. There was shouting from the beach and the lieutenant came splashing out—swearing ferociously in three or four Spanish dialects with which Shayne was unfamiliar.

"Wrong beach!" he yelled, as soon as he was close enough to be heard. "This place is nothing but a fiend inspired bog full of unmentionables. Nobody could get through to the highway."

Gonzalez sent him back to bring out the men. They came in a body, washing off mud in the clean waves, and threatening to shoot the two in the boat as traitors.

"Be still," Gonzalez yelled at them, "or I'll start the motors and leave you all to sit on the beach until the Guardias come or the mosquitos give you to their children to eat. Haven't I said you were heroes and must be ready for all things? Wait there in the water until your lieutenant and I decide what has gone wrong."

A chart and a hooded flashlight were produced, and Gonzalez finally allowed the lieutenant to discover they were in the wrong bay. The men were loaded, and the launch stood off-shore for the correct destination. Even then Gonzalez did not hurry. He kept at slow speed and checked every course bearing with Reyes.

That worthy had lost all enthusiasm for speed. As far as he was

concerned a lucky mischance—which he could happily blame on Gonzalez and Shayne—was likely to keep him out of any fighting the night might produce. If he had dared, in front of the men, he would have ordered the launch turned back as too late to do any good.

As it was the launch proceeded with more circumspection than speed while the volunteers chafed and cursed in their sopping wet clothing and checked their guns for the hundredth time.

It was just as well.

Gonzalez had finally located the correct bay and turned in from the sea, going slowly with throttled down engines. Suddenly the darkness of the beach, still a good quarter mile away, was lit by the flashes of guns and the sound of firing reached their ears. Powerful searchlights among the trees spotlighted men on the beach and the second launch lying broadside to the shore just outside the breakers. Then a burst of heavy machine gun fire tore the bottom out of the launch before it could escape.

Then men who had landed died or surrendered where the lights found them. Nobody had a chance to escape—and nobody did.

Luis Gonzalez put the helm of his launch hard over, swung the bow to the open sea and pulled out the throttle all the way. The powerful engine took hold and almost lifted the fast craft clear out of the water.

"Stop!" yelled one of the recruits. "Go back. We have to help our friends!"

"Mr. Shayne," Luis Gonzalez shouted over the rising roar of the engine, "if that fool don't close his mouth, shoot him and throw him overboard."

The excited recruit paid no attention. Mike Shayne caught the man's arm, hauled him half upright and hit him a short, pile-driving right that would have felled an ox.

It was high time. Sudden spotlights flared from a revenue cutter coming up the coast at full speed from Santa Cruz to cut them off. In the night and wind, with a rising sea piling onshore it was too far away for effective use of its guns, but the war craft turned and came after them, trying to keep the launch in view with its lights.

Gonzalez twisted his craft out of the light beams and fought the wheel to get off-shore and up-wind of the cutter. The wind was rising alarmingly from the northeast and driving big, foam crested rollers in towards the coast. He had to keep almost head on to wind and sea to keep the launch from broaching broadside to the waves, rolling over and sinking. Half the time the boat was down in the trough between waves. When it rose to a crest, however, the lights of the cutter could still be seen coming on behind them.

In the heavy seas the sheer size of the cutter, about that of a small, World War I American destroyer,

ve it an advantage over the launch
 ick would have put the bigger
 ssel hull down in a calm sea. Gon-
 lez was a seaman of consummate
 ill but he had to fight to keep
 e little craft on course and throttle
 wn to keep her from burying her-
 f in the high walls of water.

"How does that damn cutter fol-
 v us?" he yelled to Shayne. "She
 n't see us in these waves."

"Radar?" Shayne yelled back.

"Radar nothing. Any radar could
 ot us tonight could find a min-
 w in a weed bed. They got some
 ay of finding us. Look for it,
 igo. Quick."

"Bugged," Shayne said. "My God,
 ; must be bugged." He grabbed a
 ashlight and started hunting for
 y device that could broadcast a
 am the cutter could pick up and
 llow. He didn't find it. The war-
 ip came on remorselessly, gaining
 little on the launch despite every-
 ing Gonzalez could do.

Then, very suddenly the chase
 as over. In the dark there was a
 dden lull of wave intensity. They
 ashed by a long island that was
 ardly higher out of the water than
 sandspit.

"I'm in a patch of Keys," Luis
 onzalez told Shayne. "We got
 ars, reefs, coral heads. Nothing
 gger than we are can get through
 re even by daylight. They got to
 o home now. So do we. In the
 orning, *amigo*, we find the thing
 eps them after us."

"Somebody wanted to make sure



this raid never got home," Shayne
 said.

"Somebody wanted to make sure
 Luis Gonzalez never got home. That
 somebody I'm going to find. When
 I do he will wish that he never was
 born. I promise him that."

VI

BY DAWN the *Pelicano* was back
 at its home pier and the weary re-

cruits tumbled out onto the weathered planking. Lieutenant Reyes marched them off through the pines. They were white-faced from exhaustion and bitter and sad over the loss of their friends.

"Not a hero in the lot," Gonzalez said to Mike Shayne, "got sense enough to be grateful to the Holy Mother for sparing their lives. Not a one got sense enough to thank Luis Gonzalez and Mike Shayne for keeping them out of the trap somebody set for them or even to wonder who set the trap. Bah!"

"You and I are practical men," Shayne said.

"That is the truth, *amigo*. We wonder and we will find out, and so we will live longer than heroes. We will not get medals, but we will live longer."

"You're as sure as I am that there's treachery involved," Shayne said.

"Of course I am. There have been too many traps set and sprung, too many of these brave boys dead on the beaches or broken on the torture wheels of the old Spanish castles by El Jefe's bravos. Too much money has been poured into rat-holes, too many brave dreams washed away by tears. That is why my boss hired me to look for this at the same time he tipped your government to send you here."

Shayne wanted to say, "Who is your boss?" but Luis Gonzalez apparently assumed that he already

knew and it would be a mistake to admit that he didn't.

At that point Theodore came down the wharf from where the *Amador* was moored.

"You all want hot food and rest?" he said. "Go along. I'll clean up this launch and get her in shape again."

Shayne stopped him from coming aboard.

"Hot food, yes," the big redhead said. "You go fix us some breakfast and bring it here. Then I want you to take a message up to headquarters. Captain Gonzalez and I have work here."

The big man went back to the *Amador* without comment.

"You don't want him to help us?" Luis asked.

"I don't want anybody to help us till we find whatever bug that cutter smelled us out by last night," Shayne said. "Most particularly don't want the last man to really overhaul this craft before we left to come on board till we've gone over her with a fine tooth comb. Suppose he was the one to plan the bug. He could slip it out and away."

"Theodore?" Gonzalez laughed. "I think maybe you're crazy. He's not even one of our people. Besides he's been with the *Amador* since before she got into this business."

"You know better than that," Shayne said. "In treachery we trust nobody. Not even each other. May

not even ourselves. Now let's get work before somebody else interrupts us."

They began to search the launch thoroughly, trying to examine every crack and cranny and every piece of gear. The thing they were searching for did not have to be very large, and it could be hidden anywhere.

After a while Theodore brought them back trays with heaped plates of rice, ham eggs, biscuits with honey and a big pot of strong coffee.

"A spoon stand straight up in this coffee," he told them. "But don't leave him long or metal melt away." They laughed a gusty laugh.

They sat down on the deck and ate heartily.

"I wonder," Gonzalez said, "why that man don't ask what we were looking for."

"Maybe he already knows," Shayne said. "You're right. He could have been more curious. Maybe we better go over the engine next."

That was where they found the timing device, more commonly known as the bug. It was wired into the ignition system of the motor in such a way that when the motor was on current passed through the little device to broadcast a signal which could be picked up by a properly tuned receiver. Whoever was getting the signal could pick up the launch once it got under

way and keep its location pinpointed to within a few yards.

They had barely found the deadly little thing when Theodore came back up the dock. Shayne wrote out a brief note, folded it, and told him to take it up to headquarters and give it to La Antorcha.

"If he is the traitor," Gonzalez said, "I wouldn't trust him with anything I didn't want read."

"I didn't," Shayne said. "That note could be stuck on a bulletin board and I wouldn't care. On the other hand we don't know he's the man we're after yet. Somebody else could have wired that thing in, and he not spot it. After all this engine hasn't been under his care before. On top of that no bug—or pair of them if there was one on the other launch—could account for what happened last night."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean," Shayne said, "that ambush was planted and ready before we ever untied from this dock. We were ordered to a place already staked out and ready for us. The way that trap was sprung they were waiting for us right there. Too much firepower to be just from an ordinary beach watch. That cutter was waiting too close to the trap."

"They either knew there'd be two launches or were waiting for this bug to start singing. That's why they didn't show up until our launch was actually on the scene. The only reason it didn't work perfectly was because you threw their timing off."

Because you were so late our other people got ashore and sprang the trap there before we were all the way in."

"Theodore could have told them we were coming. There's a sending radio on the *Amador*," Gonzalez said. "Everybody here knew where we were going long before we left. Once the other side knew it was the Santa Cruz power plant, they could figure which beaches to stake out easy enough."

"I don't think so," Shayne said. "I think whoever planted that bug was here to do just that, nothing else. I think that was to finger us as agents so they'd be sure we wouldn't get away."

"But, *amigo*, he could have called them from here."

"Sure he could," Shayne said, "but don't forget he'd have had to risk being overheard. Radio isn't secret. Anybody can intercept. I don't just mean the colonel's radio shack either. Our own Coast Guard and Navy try to monitor everything that gets on the air in this area. So does the Bahamian police. The Haitians are supposed to have listening posts up this way to spot raids on their particular brand of earthly paradise."

"Sooner or later we'd hear about anyone sending messages from this island and he'd be smart enough to know it. It's a lot more likely the tip-off is made in some other way than by direct broadcast."

"In that case," Gonzalez said,

"somebody a lot higher up than the man who bugged that boat must have given the order to have it done—and told the other side to look out for it. That would mean the cover is blown for both of us Mr. Shayne."

"That's my idea, too, Mr. Gonzalez. If that's your name."

"It's as much mine as yours is Shayne," Luis Gonzalez said, "and you can read that any way you like. So if we're suddenly all that important, it could be Mister Top Traitor himself who's arranging a fast fade-out for us. The only one big enough to be Mr. Tops on this island is Colonel Gomez."

"You could say that," Shayne admitted, "or you could say the colonel is the only man around this sandspit big enough not to be the traitor. Remember, he's top dog here. If he wants me dead he doesn't have to play games with electronic bugs. He can pull a pistol and shoot me, or you either, in the mess hall if he wants, and nobody dare say boo to him."

"That true enough," Gonzalez said. "Also Gomez is the only man around here who isn't playing soldier. That one is all he says he is and the record checks out. He's a pro and a tough one. He's smart enough to know this electronic garbage can fail, like this one did. A bullet in the head is sure and safe."

"Okay then," Shayne said. "Maybe the colonel wouldn't use tricks. I hope not. I like him myself. But

whoever is tipping the other side has to be way up in the ranks on this side. He has to know what's going to happen in advance and in detail. That means he has to be close to the top, and the top of this whole operation is General Blanco. Who is close enough to the general in his staff or family?"

"He hasn't any family," Gonzalez said, "not since the cane cutters burned them all alive in his country house. You know that. He doesn't trust anybody but himself. The general makes his own decisions and gives his own orders. Compared to him the Sphinx in Egypt is—what you call the mouth-blabber?"

"Blabbermouth," Shayne corrected him. "Then if it comes from headquarters, what you're really saying is that it has to be General Blanco himself who's spilling the beans."

Luis Gonzalez face got suddenly hard. His right hand slid inside his shirt where Shayne knew he kept the knife that had killed Brogan.

"Senor whoever-you-are," Gonzalez said icily, "I have made a mistake. You are not from Washington, or you would not say such a thing to me."

"Why wouldn't I?" Shayne said as easily as he could manage. He braced himself for action in case Gonzalez tried to pull the knife. "Why wouldn't I?"

"You would not, Senor snake in sheep's clothing, because your

Washington people all know that I am General Blanco's man, that I would cut my own brother's throat to help the general. It was he who warned Washington. It was he who sent me to find the traitor, and I think I have found him—you!"

With the last word Gonzalez' right hand came out with the knife and he dove forward, hooking his blade up and out to disembowel the big detective.

Shayne was a lot faster than he looked and no stranger to rough and tumble combat. He was already seated on the deck in front of Gonzalez. Now he let his body drop backward to the deck below the line of the vicious thrust. His right leg kicked out along the deck, knocking Luis Gonzalez' feet from under him. At the same time the redhead's left leg doubled back and then straightened in a powerful kick. His big foot took Gonzalez in the solar plexus with terrific force.

The Latin's breath went out of both lungs with a noise like a slashed tire. The knife dropped from his hand as his body was lifted and kicked backwards into the cockpit of the launch. Almost unconscious, he still fought for breath.

Shayne was up and into the cockpit, pinning the man with his legs and holding his own knife at his throat. The two men stayed that way, frozen like a tableau of a piece of statuary, until Luis began to recover both breath and sanity.

When the prostrate man began to struggle feebly Shayne held him fast.

"Stop it," he said. "I've just proved I'm not the traitor in this caper." He saw the question in Gonzalez' eyes and continued. "If I was, I'd kill you now and show Gomez the bug to prove why I did it. You were skipper of this launch, and responsible for everything on it."

He got off the prostrate Gonzalez and sat on the rail of the boat. Then he took the knife and flipped it so that the point sank half an inch into the deck planking and the hilt vibrated in the early morning sun.

"You'll need that thing when we find the right man," he said. "Pick it up now, and let's get going. I've got a hunch this will be a busy day."

Luis Gonzalez sat up, retrieved his knife, and put it back inside his shirt. "Do you still accuse the general? I am his man, first and last, and if you do, you and I can't work together any more. That is so, even though I am grateful that you spared my life. Even though I may have made a mistake in accusing you."

"We need each other," Shayne said.

"Yes. I know that, but I am still the general's man."

Shayne's big hand went up and stroked his ear lobe in sure sign that he was thinking hard.

"I'll tell you, Luis," he said. "Right now I'm not sure enough to really accuse anybody. There's

still pieces missing to make the picture come clear. Till I find them I'm just trying to keep an open mind and try to look at all the possibilities. No more than that. I'm not committed to any one loyalty like you are, so maybe I can see a bit more clearly than you can."

"I guess that will have to do for now," Gonzalez said. "Only don't make any mistake about it. No matter what General Blanco may be or may have done, I'm still his man. I give you fair warning."

"Fair enough," the detective said.

They cleaned up the launch where their search had torn things up. Shayne put the bug, carefully wrapped in a bandana, in his hip pocket.

"Time enough to smash this thing when the colonel's seen it," he said. "Even if it's still broadcasting, the signal won't carry far without booster power, and they know where this island is anyway. Now let's go see Gomez."

VII

WHEN THEY WALKED into the headquarters area there was an air of gloom and depression that could almost be cut with a dull knife. Most of the recruits, who were supposed to be getting some rest after their experience of the night before, were sitting on the steps of their barracks and talking to each other in low tones. They were obviously unhappy.

So were the men and officers of the permanent cadre. Even the most inveterate goldbricks of the lot were busy this morning stacking and opening crates, cleaning weapons and the like.

The sentry in front of the radio shack was marching up and down in a most military manner, and this time there was another sentry in front of Colonel Gomez' quarters who turned the two men away. The colonel was busy and could see no one.

Mike Shayne and Luis Gonzalez kept out in the open where they could be easily seen and, as he'd hoped, La Antorcha came out shortly and joined them.

She too was apparently in a mood of depression. The mop of flaming hair was rolled up under a wide-brimmed Panama hat and she wore a plain man's khaki shirt and slacks.

"I got your note," she told Shayne. "Your man brought it to my colonel first."

"We figured he would," Shayne said. "It wasn't sealed, or anything he shouldn't read."

"I spotted that," she said. "It was smart of you."

"Mr. Shayne's a smart man," Gonzalez said. "I hope Colonel Gomez appreciates the fact."

"He usually accepts my opinion on those things," Ann Riker said. "I know Mike's smart and honest, and I've already said so. Now what do you boys want to see me about so



urgently except to tell me there's treachery going on?"

"You know it then?" Gonzalez asked without much surprise.

"Albert Gomez is no fool," Big Annie said, "and Mike will tell you idiots don't last long in Miami night spots. Of course we knew it. We've been trying to find out who's mixed in it for a long time now. That's why Gomez tried to get last night's raid called off. He was afraid it would be like the others and the new men would all be lost before they were even trained. I suppose you boys had a hand in the fact that any of them got back at all?"

Shayne told her what Gonzalez had done to avoid the trap.

"They almost got us anyway," he said and gave her the bug. "Somebody wanted to be real sure our boatload didn't get back. If Luis here hadn't made it into the shoals before they got close enough to

open fire with their guns, nobody at all would have made it back."

"I'll take this to Gomez," she said. "If you think that black of yours planted this thing, why didn't you shoot him this morning when you found it? Nobody would blame you for it today, the mood they're all in."

"We don't know for sure he was the one," Shayne explained. "Besides, even if he was, we'd rather have him around a while longer to lead us to his boss. Dead he can't tell us any of the things we need to know."

"I thought Captain Brogan was the traitor on the *Amador*," Gonzalez said. "I figured with him out of the way the trouble might stop, but it didn't. He was almost surely in the pay of El Jefe, but trouble didn't end with him."

"He told you I was El Jefe's man," Shayne said. "You think the reason he wanted me killed was just the other way round?"

"Sure. I figured he thought like I did, that you work for the American government. That's why he wanted you out of the way. So I think that's good time to pull rug out from under his feet."

"Who do you work for, Mike?" Annie asked.

Right now I'm working for myself," Shayne said. "I want to keep us all alive and unless I miss my guess that's going to be a hard job. Whoever is back of all the treachery must know we're on his tail. Every-

thing that's been happening goes to show he wants us dead, and we haven't seen his last try yet. Off here in the middle of noplac we're on our own. If we don't figure out who he is first, he'll have us for sure."

"Couldn't we take the *Amador* and run for it?" the woman asked. Then she answered herself. "No, you could, but Gomez is a soldier. He wouldn't leave his post, and I won't go without him. You two would have to admit you were licked if you ran now and that would give him a chance to cover his tracks for sure."

"It wouldn't work anyway," Shayne said. He stood up and pointed back towards the landing.

"Go get Gomez," he said. "I think we really need a soldier now."

From the direction of the wharf and boats great, solid column of heavy black smoke was rising straight up into the still morning air.

"What is it?" Annie asked.

"I think," Gonzalez said, "that gunboat followed us all the way home. I think somebody wants us dead bad enough to risk making the Bahamian government mad, the English mad, the United States mad. Somebody says go in and get those boys. Somebody—"

His last words were drowned out by a smashing explosion close at hand. They whirled as the walls of the radio shack across the clearing blew out into splinters and shards of glass flying from the windows.

Then sentry sprawled like a broken scarecrow in a welter of his blood.

"Somebody tossed in dynamite," Luis Gonzalez yelled. "Now we can't call for help if we want to."

"There he goes," Shayne shouted and took off after a figure that broke from shelter and ran for the pines. It was the former bolita man called Captain George.

Shayne was closest to the runner and gaining fast. The other men in the clearing seemed stunned by the sudden attack. Some were unarmed and others running towards headquarters.

The big redhead put on a burst of speed he knew he hadn't equalled in years. The officer had given himself away by running as he did. Once he was caught, Shayne was sure he could be made to tell who'd put him up to the bombing.

Captain George was almost at the edge of the woods, but the redhead was close. The fleeing man turned, yanked a revolver out of his holster and fired wildly over Mike Shayne's head.

The man never saw his death. Even as he shot at Shayne a tall figure stepped out of the woods, leveled a sub-machine gun and almost cut the fleeing man in half with a long burst.

"You damn fool," Shayne yelled. "I'd have had him alive in another minute."

The gunner was the black engineer from the *Amador*.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Shayne," he said

quietly. "You were so close I was afraid he'd kill you with his next shot."

"Off balance and winded the way he was he couldn't have hit a bull elephant," Shayne said. "Come on. Rally on Colonel Gomez."

To himself he wondered if Theodore had wanted to save Mike Shayne's life or the secret that Captain George could have told if they'd taken him alive. Now there was no way he could know what that secret had been.

By the time he got back to the center of the clearing some measure of order was being restored. Colonel Gomez was roaring orders in pungent Spanish and the men were beginning to recover from their shock.

The colonel had no attention of moving on the dock. He was apparently ready to write off the boats and the men there as a total loss. To have attacked a superior force which had already landed and established a defensive perimeter would have been completely foolish, and he was soldier enough to know it.

From the way the men were loading themselves with guns, food and ammunition it was also plain that Colonel Gomez did not intend to try and defend the camp area. What vehicles were available were hastily loaded and driven into the pines through natural glades at the far end of the clearing.

Shayne and Gonzalez armed themselves with pistols, hand gre-

nades, submachine guns and all the ammunition they could carry and followed along.

Once in the woods they found that they hadn't far to go. Just back of camp there was a low ridge that probably represented the spine or highest elevation of the island. Over the crest, where they couldn't be seen either from the camp or the air because of trees or brush, were five or six man-made caves or shallow roofed cellars stocked with food and ammunition. There were also four .50 caliber heavy machine guns emplaced back of sandbags and commanding the entire camp area.

The ridge was covered at its left by the shallow lake which fronted the camp and fell away at the right into hollows choked with trees, vines and thorny scrub.

Commandante Gomez had been too good a soldier not to prepare positions in case of just such an attack as had taken place. His men would be able to fight and give a good account of themselves instead of just hiding like frightened rabbits in the pine woods.

The pity of it was that his force was so small and poorly organized despite his best efforts. Besides Shayne, Gonzalez and Theodore there were only the ten surviving recruits, the officers and women and the thirty to forty men of the permanent cadre. Some of these were cooks and clerks, and only the half dozen professionals who proceeded

to man the machine guns could count as real fighting men.

On the other hand they all knew that the boats were gone and there remained no way at all to escape from the island. They knew also what happened to men and women in the dungeons and torture chambers of El Jefe's political police.

After its own fashion every face showed a grim determination to die fighting rather than surrender.

They hadn't very long to wait. Indeed the last men were still in the barracks area when a shell from the gunboat came arching over the pines to explode with a bang and a cloud of smoke and dust in the center of what had been the parade ground.

Three more followed at close intervals, the last blowing a hole in the roof of one of the storage hangars. Then the shelling stopped. The gunners were firing blind at extreme range, more for the effect on the defender's morale than for any actual physical damage they could hope to do.

The colonel was going up and down the defense line, smoking a long black cigar and repeating over and over the order that no one fire his weapon without a specific command. He also had the cooks' issue rations of cold meat and bread and bottles of a well known California wine.

"Always give the condemned man a good meal," Gonzalez said, helping himself.

"I wouldn't say that," Shayne said with his mouth half full of cold corned beef and bread. "Anybody smart enough to fix up this reserve line is likely to have a whole deck of aces up his sleeve. He won't be thinking of us as condemned men at all. In fact I'll give eight to five odds he's got the boys from the gunboat cast in that role."

"I hope you're right."

"I think I am. By the way, we'd better both keep an eye on friend Theodore. If I see him make any wrong moves like getting behind Colonel Gomez with a gun in his hand, I'm going to shoot him myself. I don't like the way he seems to keep bobbing up at the wrong time."

"Bobbing up? Oh I see what you mean. He stands in the shadow of trouble. You don't suspect him of signaling the gunboat to come in?"

"No, I don't. They've known where this island was for a long time. Any signal to attack wouldn't come from here but from somebody a lot higher up."

"You think that puts the colonel in the clear?" Gonzalez asked.

"To be frank with you, I do. If he really shows fight here, I'll be ninety-nine percent sure."

"That is most generous of you, Senior Yankee," said the colonel's grim voice. He'd come up behind them without being heard. "If any men in this command show as much fight as Alberto Gomez today, I'll buy you the best dinner in Mi-

ami when we get back to the mainland. Not that what has to be done here and now would reflect much credit on a soldier." He spat on the ground with contempt.

"You think they'll walk right out in the open under our guns?" Shayne asked with some skepticism.

"They will, Mr. American Agent," the colonel said. "In the first place they're sailors, not soldiers. They don't know how to fight on land. They're sure they've got us cut off with no way out. They outnumber and outgun us. They know I've got untrained kids and good-for-nothing goldbricks mostly. Whoever commands them is absolutely sure he can walk his boys right over us. When they come out in the open we mow them like wheat."

"That is what I have lived for, Colonel," said a new voice. It was young Carlos de Leon, who had walked up to their group. His eyes were burning with an almost fevered excitement. "That is what I wait for and pray for and dream," he said. "It is the chance to get them under my sights, the murdering beasts!"

"Stay with these men and do as they say," the colonel said. "Your dream may come true very soon."

"I see we can beat them off," Shayne said, "but won't they send for help?"

"They won't have the time," the colonel said. "For them I have the great surprise. They must win all

by the first hand, or they have lost the game. Well, *adios mi bravos*." He moved on along the line.

Young Carlos found himself a position next to Mike Shayne.

"Holy Mother, bring them to us," he said in a low voice.

"That's no way for a man to pray," the detective said. "Here. Have something to eat. You'll feel better."

"No. No," the boy said. "This is the time for killing, not eating. This is the time for *la vengar*."

"You want to revenge your comrades?"

"Them too, but mostly my Maria, my sister whom we have not seen since she was four years old."

"You mean they killed the child?" Shayne asked.

"No. Not killed. Worse than that. They captured her and her old nurse when we fired the revolution. They hold her and bring her up as communista, maybe worse. I don't know, but to think of her in their hands, it is to kill."

"I'm sorry," Shayne said. He hadn't known about the sister and it helped him understand the boy's eagerness to get into action. He had a feeling that it could explain other things as well.

They hadn't very long to think or wait.

The two white uniformed sailors, rifles held at the ready, came out of the road through the pines and paused. For a long time, it seemed, they just stood there and looked

around the deserted compound. Nothing moved on the parade ground or the old air strip or among the barracks and storage buildings.

After a while one of the men called back down the road and a young officer in a starched uniform came out of the trees to join them. He put a silver whistle to his lips and blew it. There were answering whistles from among the trees. Then men began to step out in small groups and advance on the deserted buildings. From the distance they looked almost like toy sailors or actors in a movie.

The men hidden on the ridge braced themselves and took aim. They were outnumbered by at least two to one, but all the advantage of surprise would be theirs. Shayne found himself wondering how this had ever happened to him. He had fought for his life in the past against hoodlums and murderers, but this was something else again. He waited, finger on trigger, for Colonel Gomez' order to fire.

That order never came.

Instead there was a swiftly growing roar of motors from overhead. As both parties watched, frozen in position, a Bahamian police plane and a big American Naval Air Transport swooped down on the old landing strip. Overhead other planes—naval fighter bombers swooped and circled in a show of overwhelming power.

"Just like a movie," Mike Shayne



said in relief. "Here comes the U.S. Cavalry over the hill."

"Cavalry?" Luis Gonzalez said. "I don't see any cavalry."

Young Carlos de Leon had the submachine gun still cradled to his cheek and his finger on the trigger. Tears of rage and frustration were in his eyes. He said nothing at all.

VIII

THE MEETING WAS in a very, very carefully guarded office in the Federal Office Building in Miami, Florida, and it was presided over by a man who Mike Shayne knew only as Mr. Smith. The chairs were comfortable, the cigars and brandy and rum the best that money could buy.

Colonel Gomez was there, his khakis traded for a Palm Beach cloth suit. So was Mike Shayne,

comfortable in tropical weight suit and white shirt. Luis Gonzalez had a glass of fine rum in his hand and a smile on his tanned face.

"Gentlemen," Mr. Smith said, "I've called this meeting because, first and last, everyone here has been primarily interested in one thing. I mean of course the identity of the traitor within the counter-revolutionary ranks. Officially of course it isn't my business. Our people showed up on the island only at the request of a friendly power and to prevent what might otherwise have turned into a serious international incident. I know you all understand this."

"Of course we do," Colonel Gomez said. "As you know I arranged with the best unnamed friendly power that they were to call you if they did not receive a prearranged signal from my radio every hour on the hour. The traitor who blew up my radio equipment didn't know it, but he was calling for help for us when he did it."

"So that's why help came," Shayne said under his breath. He drank some of his favorite brandy.

"Knowing you, Colonel," Mr. Smith said, "I'm inclined to think we really rescued the crew of the gunboat from what would probably have been a massacre. However, we needn't split hairs about that. As I was saying, I too am interested in the traitor's identity. Actually I was interested enough to have an agent of my own on the ground.

I believe you all know him well."

He pressed a buzzer and the Jamaican called Theodore came in from an adjoining office.

The big black grinned at Shayne and Gonzalez.

"I'm glad you two didn't decide to kill me," he said. "There were other bugs on the launch. For a while I wondered."

"Just for information," Shayne said, "did you plant the bug we found?"

"No," Theodore said, "but I knew it was there. The man called Captain George planted it as well as blowing up the radio. He was the traitor's agent on the island."

"This is all very well," Mr. Smith said, "but it takes us away from the point. Did any of you manage to find out who the real traitor is?"

"Why yes," Mike Shayne said. "Didn't the rest of you?"

Nobody answered. For the moment he had the undivided attention of everybody in the room.

"The top traitor," Shayne said, "had to be someone at the very top executive level of the counter revolutionary movement. Once we knew it wasn't Colonel Gomez, that fact was clear to us all.

"Like all of you except Luis Gonzalez here, I thought at first it had to be General Blanco. He was the top. Who but he knew all the plans and all the details of the raids? Who but he could give orders that

had to be obeyed? Apparently no one.

"But there was someone else, someone whose position and personal integrity were such that we held him above suspicion. I began to suspect that man when I learned from Luis that General Blanco too was searching for a traitor. I knew the truth just before the rescue planes arrived."

"You can't mean Senator de Leon?" Mr. Smith said.

"I have to mean the senator," Shayne said. "He hired me to protect his grandson, not to find a traitor. It was a good cover for him."

"But what led you to him?"

"I'm a detective," Mike Shayne said, and I think like one. I solve a case by finding someone who had both motive and opportunity for the crime and then watching him till I find the evidence. Only two men really have the opportunity for this treachery. One is General Blanco and the other the senator. I found a motive for de Leon when young Carlos told me that El Jefe's people still hold his sister, the senator's granddaughter. There is the lever to make a traitor of a decent man.

"Watch the senator closely, and you'll prove I'm right. You may not want to punish him. I'm sure his own conscience keeps him in hell as it is. Just take away his opportunity, and that will be all that's needed to end the treachery."

Mike Shayne was right. That's all that was needed.

Alive, he was old and no good to anyone. Dead, he had a fine bounty on him. So I did the only thing...

DEAD BROKE

by

EDWARD WELLEN



THEY HAD disbarred him in more ways than one; Bob Quinn did not have the means to quench his thirst. And, as though it were in the pay of the pub-keepers, the salt wind of the English Channel stung his lips and he grew thirstier. A man huddling in a fine coat hurried by his outstretched palm with a short laugh.

Quinn's face mottled more deeply and after a moment he followed the man in the fine coat.

It was dark on the lonely pier,

in spite of the lamps, and the sea drowned the sound of their feet on the wooden planking. The man in the fine coat did not look back. It was growing windy; he tightened his bowler and raised the fine collar and bent into the wind. They were nearing the end of the pier; the man slowed. Quinn found shadow.

The man had stopped and was holding to the cold wet railing; he turned from the dark waters whitening in the wind and gazed back the length of West Pier and fixed his

eyes on the inshore lights of Brighton. The far colors tinted his pale face like a cheap photo. He gave a little shake of his head and turned back to the sea.

Quinn peered around; they were alone in the cold dark and the heavy weather. His tongue licking the salt on his lips, Quinn moved toward the man, made it in reach of him. At the last, the man turned a face sick with fear; his eyes opened wide.

Quinn's fist struck; remembering the short laugh it got as a palm, it struck hard. The man staggered but did not fall; he put up his hands to fight back. But the blow had stunned him and he fought blindly; Quinn's hands felled him. The man snorted for breath, then lay still. Quinn bent over him. The man was dead.

But that was not the thing that stopped Quinn's heart; he had got beyond caring for life, his own or anyone's. What stopped his heart was that now he saw the coat close to, he saw it was less grand than it had seemed. It was fine goods and there was wear in it yet, but you could tell by the fraying and the poor fit that someone had handed it down to the man or the man had bought it secondhand.

Trembling, Bob Quinn's hands went through the coat and with mounting fear through the rest of the man's clothing. Quinn's hope was that he would find a few coins at least, but hope and reality were

poles apart. He found a cheap watch not worth pawning, a crumpled pack of Players he pocketed, and an empty wallet. He eyed and felt the wallet; the gilt initialing had worn away but deep in the leather were the letters *S.P.* He ripped the wallet apart for hidden pockets; there were none; the wallet was empty; not even any papers or cards or photos. He threw a curse to the wind and the wallet to the sea.

The fine coat had jobbed him; all he had to show was a cheap watch, with scratched nickel plating. The world flamed red in Quinn's eyes and in a rage he cast the watch back to the elements. He had not thought to wonder why the man chose to walk out on the pier on a night of storm. He asked himself that now and laughed; the wind tore the laugh to rags.

It would be a big joke if the man had meant to leap into the sea. But if it was that, why had he fought back? Maybe it was not the man fighting back, maybe it was life in the man fighting back against death. It would have fought back against the sea too then, but it would have been too late then too. It would not fight back any more. Into the drink with him and out on the tide when it ebbed. Would it wash him across to the rusting hulks and the crumbling blockhouses on the French coast?

Quinn gazed down at the deep shadow that was the man in the

fine coat, then foam hid it. Seaweed swirled around the pilings; mermaid's hair. He laughed again and left the man to his pleasure.

It was growing windier. Quinn ducked into one of the glass shelters on the parade to light up one of the crumpled Players. It only made his throat drier; he was thirstier and no better off. Worse off; a man really needed spirits after a trying experience. He moved on, his shadow swinging to and fro past tarry wooden crosspieces gleaming in the spray; he let the wind drive him deep into town.

His changeless pockets disbaring him, he stood outside a pub. He laughed and a man and a woman eyed Quinn and veered around him into the pub. Warmth and noise and smell foamed out, then the door swung to, combing all that off. Quinn rubbed his nose on the glass to watch the publican draw their beers. He watched for a time, then sloped away into the night.

Hours he wandered the cold dark blowing streets and grew drunk with weariness, but his thirst merely worsened. He tried his hand at begging, but the few who were abroad would not stop for the soiled palm and the hoarse voice.

He moved on, full of rage. He wished he had the man in the fine coat standing wet and dripping before him so he could smack him again and again. He kicked in fury at rubble; the town still showed scars from the blitz. Fritz knew how

cheap life was, all right. He lit up the last of the Players and threw the empty pack to the wind.

There were laws against littering; he laughed. He had shaved the law fairly close in his time—in one grab for big profit, too close. Yet he still knew more law than most practicing lawyers. He drew deeply, swellingly, on the Player.

A thought had cleaved the darkness and he knew a strange feeling of joy as though all time had bred him for this moment. It was a simple thought, an old thought with him. Life was cheap. But it had sudden new meaning.

All he had to do was walk the shores of Britain and—disregarding fine cheating coats—wherever he came upon anyone in lonely darkness by the sea, overpower the unit, man, woman, or child, and hold the head under water till the lungs filled with the sea. And then—but never work it twice in the same place or use the same name twice.

Why not work it now? The unit in the fine coat in the seaweed swirl need not be a loss. The tide was still at the flood, the body would not yet have washed away. He laughed. No, he must look sad.

Wet and windburned, a policeman came into the station, glanced curiously at Quinn, then spoke to the man at the desk. "We've found him. Face bashed in. No identification. By the looks of him, dead before he went in."

The man at the desk eyed Quinn. "When d'ye say you found the corpse?"

It had been more than six hours, but Quinn repeated the cunning lie. He knew his English law; if you came upon a body on the shore you had to report it within six hours of the finding.

"It was five hours before, when I first told you. Five hours and a half now. It gave me rather a turn and I made straight for a pub; afraid I had too many. But I did get around at last to notifying you, eh?"

The man at the desk said, "That's what troubles me. You see, the storm has made the pier danger-

ous; we've allowed no one through the turnstiles for over six hours. It is my duty to warn you that anything you may say will be taken down and may be used against you. But will you explain why in the world you came in of your own free will to tell us of a corpse we never should have found otherwise?"

Robert Quinn stared past the man and gave a short laugh. Life was cheap, the dead man's and his own.

He drew his bruised hand from his pocket and turned it up in a quizzical gesture.

"I came for the five shillings one receives for reporting," he said.



Complete in the Next Issue

BIG HOUSE BLUES

A Thrilling New Mike Shayne Short Novel

By BRETT HALLIDAY

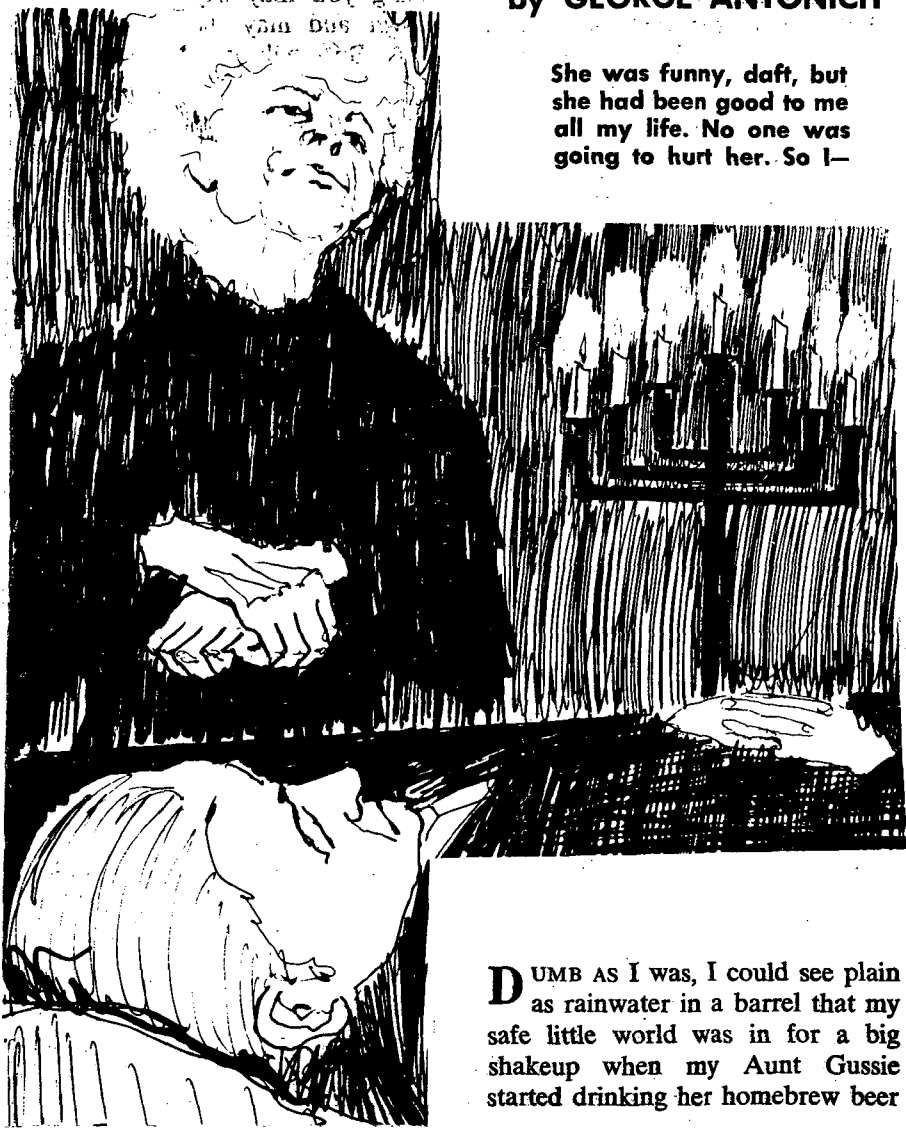
He was young, handsome and his inheritance was great—including a nasty little commodity called Murder. For someone in Death's inner circle had claimed him, and there could be no way out—unless Mike Shayne could somehow escape a gangland death sentence and save him.

Don't Miss This Outstanding Novel

A SHORT BIER

by **GEORGE ANTONICH**

She was funny, daft, but
she had been good to me
all my life. No one was
going to hurt her. So I—



DUMB AS I was, I could see plain
as rainwater in a barrel that my
safe little world was in for a big
shakeup when my Aunt Gussie
started drinking her homebrew beer

warm, right out of the bottle—and going to funerals. I mean, she'd go to anybody's funeral, anytime, anyplace.

Naturally, in a town as small as Mount Hebron, some of the deceased was bound to be friends or acquaintances. But mostly they were folks she'd never heard of, except for seeing their names and departure dates in the *Herald's* obituary column.

That afternoon, when she drove us back home from a late burial, aiming her wheezing old Edsel up the long driveway, her brother Claude was there to meanmouth her. After a redfaced, teeth-gnashing time of working up a full head of steam, he exploded:

"Have you been at it again, Augusta? Good lord in heaven, your crazy indiscriminate funeral-hopping is making us Gormans the laughing stock of town."

Aunt Gussie grinned. Her blue eyes twinkling, she said, "Mind your high blood pressure, Claude. The doctor's already warned you twice. Keep racing your motor like that and you'll blow a gasket for sure."

Aunt Gussie was a tiny, pert and lively seventy-year-old charmer with cotton-candy hair and a smile warm enough to melt bill collectors hearts. Since I considered her as much an angel as you're likely to find on this earth, I was peeved at Claude calling her actions crazy. It always seemed to me that Aunt Gussie was as sane as anybody in the Gorman

family, maybe a lot saner than most.

But her younger brother Claude—I never could bring myself to call him Uncle—didn't see it that way at all. His hair was matched by his complexion and temper. All three were fiery, like hot coals glowing in a grate. He had small, suspicious eyes and a nose like an upsidedown question mark.

"What in thunder are you trying to prove?" he yelled at her. "You guzzle that homebrew and force yourself on bereaved families in their time of grief—I swear, Augusta, you keep it up, they're gonna throw a net over you."

"You'd like that, wouldn't you, Claude?" I said. "Then you could sell Aunt Gussie's property like you been itching to do."

Claude bellied up to me and snapped, "Mind your mouth, you big overgrown idiot." Then he backed away. I had him by thirty hard pounds and as many years.

"You shouldn't talk to Buddy like that," Aunt Gussie spoke up. "The boy is learning real fast. One of these days not a gardener in all Mount Hebron will be able to make things grow like him."

"The boy," Claude snorted, "could use a little fertilizer on his head. He hasn't got the brains of a retarded peahen. I swear, he was born stupid and he's been losing ground ever since."

I guess I was about the second biggest disappointment in Claude's life. The first was when old Virgil



Gorman died and left all his property to Aunt Gussie. To my way of thinking, it was only right and proper that he did. I mean, when the old man took to his sick bed it was Aunt Gussie who stayed behind to look after him.

The oldest of the three children, she spent her life caring for her father. Claude, he scampered off to college like nothing was wrong at home. My father fell in love with a stock company actress, my mother-to-be, and lit off for California with her.

Old Virgil Gorman took a miserable long time to die. Poor Aunt Gussie's golden years came and went but she stayed with Grandpa, making him comfortable and cheering him right up to the end of his days. Spinstered beyond repair, she

was living all alone in the big house when my folks was killed. That's when she'd sent for me to come live with her.

"He can stay in the upstairs bedroom," she'd insisted over Claude's loud protests. "Matt's insurance money will pay his share, and he'd be a big help to me."

She needed help, too. Grandpa Gormans long illness had used up what cash there was. That neglected house just cried for a fresh coat of paint and a new roof. By this time Claude was in the real estate business, but he wouldn't help her with cash. Instead, he kept pestering her to let him sell the property. It was no secret that he had plans to dicker with a construction outfit that put up shopping centers.

"Let me handle the deal for you," Claude would beg. "This old house is too big for you. With your profits you could get a fine new apartment in town, with a maid."

In the end, just to get needed repair money, she did sell some wooded acres around the main grounds. But she refused to part with the house and her precious gardens.

"I was born here," she declared stubbornly, "and I aim to live here till I die."

I was glad she'd stuck to her guns. I'd found me a good home, and I loved Aunt Gussie dearly. She treated me like a son and spent considerable time teaching me to talk without stuttering. After my

lessons she'd help me work on the house, and show me how to care for her roses, the oleander she loved, and the sweet-smelling jasmine.

"Mind you have that ladder braced real good before you go up on the roof," she'd caution me. Or, "Don't chew on those oleander leaves, Buddy. They're poison. They'll kill you off quicker than a heart attack."

Dumb as I was, it was hard to remember all her instructions, but I did my best to please her. I guess the only time I ever really displeased her was once when I trapped a rabbit in a snare I'd built. I wanted to pen him up and tame him.

"Turn him loose, Buddy!" she commanded. "God's creatures were not meant to be cooped up. I believe I'd rather be dead than locked up against my will."

I turned the rabbit loose and worked even harder to please her. "You're still a little weak in the memory department," she told me one day as I pruned her roses, "but you've got a promising green thumb. You can make yourself a good living with it when I'm gone."

Aunt Gussie gone? The thought of it shook a long and lonely shudder out of me.

But Aunt Gussie was still very much in the thick of things. There on the front porch, she glared at Claude for low-rating me. "Did you come here to make fun of people,

or is there something on your mind?"

Claude raised his bushy eyebrows and reached into his pocket for an envelope. When he brought it out his face was red as a ketchup bottle.

"It's this!" he screeched. "It's not bad enough that you drink homebrew beer and make a spectacle of yourself all over town you had to go and do a crazy thing like this!"

Aunt Gussie recognized the envelope at once. She smiled happily. "I see you got my invitation."

"Invitation?" Claude raged. "It's more like a passport to the looney bin—the nut farm—the insane asylum!" He stopped talking abruptly and clutched at his chest. Breathing all raspy and noisy, he slumped down to the porch steps.

"What'll my friends say?" he whined when he'd caught his breath.

"I'm hoping," Aunt Gussie said, "that they'll all come. I've sent out a passel of invitations."

"*To your funeral?*" Claude said, his voice a hoarse whisper.

"To my funeral," Aunt Gussie said. "I thought we'd have the wake on Thursday night, and the burial ceremony early Friday morning. That way it won't spoil anybody's weekend."

Claude's face turned from a rusty red to a washed-out white. He struggled up from the steps.

"Let's go in out of the sun," he

croaked. "I could do with a good stiff drink."

I helped him into the parlor, then went to the kitchen and poured him a glass of his favorite apple brandy. *Whoeeee!* I didn't see how he could stomach the stuff. I'd tried some once and it tasted to me like ground-up rotten apple cores. After he'd gulped at it for a time, he turned his blazing eyes on Aunt Gussie.

"Isn't it customary," he sneered, "to have one's funeral *after* one dies?"

"That's a lot of old fashioned nonsense," Aunt Gussie snorted. "I've always had a great hankering to see my own funeral before I die."

"A burial is a sacred and solemn event," Claude argued, "You can't make a mockery of it."

"I don't intend to," Aunt Gussie replied. "And I don't believe it should be the sad and gloomy task it's become. After all, as Christians we're taught to believe that life after death is a beautiful thing, much better than anything on this sorry earth. So why should funerals be sad?"

"Tradition," Claude gasped. "Custom demands that certain rituals remain intact. Augusta, you simply cannot go through with this."

"Fiddlesticks! I'm striking a blow for emancipation. I've been going to all those funerals to make people happy, to convince them it's more a beginning than an end. I

want no mourners at my wake. I want it to be a gay and joyous time. I plan to serve champagne, plenty of food and loud music."

"I won't let you do it," Claude fumed. "I'll get a restraining order against it. I'll—I'll have Judge Riley commit you!"

Mean as he was, I don't think Claude meant to say it—at first. It was more a case of his mouth working faster than his brain. Then I could see the idea take hold of him. His raging stopped and a cunning animal look washed over his beefy face. He finished his drink and stood up.

"I've got pressing business in town," he said. "But I would like to come back tonight. Will you be home, Augusta?"

Aunt Gussie nodded. "Buddy and I are going for a little hike in the woods before dinner, to tidy things up a bit. My evening will be free."

That night, after our walk in the woods, I just poked at my food. I would have gone right up to bed, but I knew I wouldn't sleep for worrying about Aunt Gussie. Sometimes, I decided, she acted just as childlike as Claude thought her to be. If I had my way, I'd have run him off with a pitchfork. Dumb as I was, I couldn't put my fears into so many words.

But I knew she was in grave danger from what Claude might do, the smell of money clogging his nostrils and his reasoning. I

went out on the front porch. I sat on the covered swing, and I prayed—not for myself, but for Aunt Gussie.

I was still there, all swallowed up in the shadows, when Claude's car drove up. He got out real fast and went around to open the opposite door. I could see it was Judge Riley he was helping out.

"I don't see why in Sam Hill you dragged me out here tonight," Judge Riley complained. "You know this is my poker night."

Judge Ben Riley was a sneaky looking weasel of a man with the sallow complexion of a bucket of used lard. Red and blue veins stood out on his doorknob nose like lines on a road map. He was real fond of breathing fire and brimstone at anybody brought up before him on drunk charges, but I'd bet he didn't get that swole-up nose from drinking ice tea!

"I'm at my wits' end," Claude told him. "You know how crazy Augusta's been acting lately. The point is, I want you to verify my suspicions."

"And what are your suspicions, Claude?"

"That my sister Augusta is insane, psychotic, completely unable to manage her own affairs."

"I gathered as much from what you told me on the phone," said Judge Riley. "So your sister is insane? And what brought you to this rather startling conclusion?"

"By watching her. By listening

to her harebrained ideas. Maybe insane is a bit strong. Perhaps incompetent is a better word."

Let's not skirt around the muddy water," said Judge Riley. "If you want what I think you want, *incompetent* isn't strong enough."

I could hear Claude gulp noisily. "All right then," he said. "I think she's insane."

"And you do want to have her committed?"

Claude didn't say anything out loud. I peeked out and saw him nod his head up and down.

"That," said Judge Riley, "would give you control over her affairs—her property—wouldn't it?"

"Oh hell!" Claude snapped. "Let's stop this horsing around. With the acres you bought from Augusta, and me handling the sale of the remaining property, we could make ourselves a killing from the shopping center people."

"Couldn't you talk her into selling?"

Claude shook his head. "Having her locked up is the only way we can swing it."

Judge Riley made little clucking sounds deep in his throat for a time.

"That property of hers you sold me has been a white elephant for sure," he moaned. "I would dearly love to unload it."

"Then you'll do it? You'll arrange a sanity hearing?"

Judge Riley thought about it for about a tenth of a second.

"I'll give her a preliminary ques-

tioning tonight," he said. "And if I concur with your judgement, you're the only one who can sign the necessary papers." He paused, then brought the palms of his hands together with a sharp, decisive clap. "But I think it can all be arranged to our mutual profit."

Claude heaved a big sigh of relief. "Wonderful," he said. "And the sooner the better. I'd like to get things started before she goes through with that fool notion of having her own funeral next week."

"No," said Judge Riley. "I think not, Claude. Let Augusta go ahead with her macabre plans. Don't you see? Her outrageous actions will only clinch your case against her. You can sign the papers the day after her—ah, funeral."

I sat on the swing holding my breath, afraid to move for fear they'd see me. A cold shiver ran down my spine. If they could do this terrible thing to someone as sweet and gentle as Aunt Gussie, what kind of horror could they cook up for me?

I wanted to rush in to Aunt Gussie, to warn her against what them two varmints had planned for her. But before I could make a move the front door opened, spilling out a bright splash of light.

"Is that you, Claude?" Aunt Gussie called. "For land's sake, come on in out of the night air."

I didn't follow them in. Instead, I sat there for a time, my head swimming in all I'd overheard. I



got up finally and walked through the garden. The smell of jasmine was sweet and heavy in the air. Moonlight bounced off the leathery leaves of the oleander and caught the clusters of fragrant flowers. A smidgin of air stirred the silky catkins on the pussywillows by the creek, and the crickets was all chirking up a storm.

Instead of cheering me like it usually did, it all weighed me down in gloom. I couldn't bear to see Aunt Gussie sent away from all this. It was her whole life. "God's creatures were not meant to be cooped up," she'd told me. *"I believe I'd rather be dead than locked up against my will."*

I knew then what I had to do.

By the time I'd finished outside and walked around to the kitchen, my mind was made up for sure. There just wasn't any other way

out—for me, or for poor Aunt Gussie.

She smiled up at me when I came into the parlor and leaned up against the wall. But the other two paid me no mind.

"Judge Riley is going to ask you some questions," Claude was saying. "And I want you to answer him as truthfully as you can. Do you understand me, Augusta?"

Aunt Gussie hiccuped and grinned at him. "Am I being third-degreed, Claude?"

"You are not being third-degreed," Judge Riley said, his voice as reassuring as a snake bite. "It's just that I would like to get some insight into your thinking processes. To begin with, there's this matter of your compulsive desire to attend funerals. Can you tell me why you do it?"

"Of course," said Aunt Gussie. "It's my small way of spreading cheer in a cheerless world."

Claude was trying real hard to manage his temper, but his glowering face looked like a hand grenade with the pin pulled out. He cried, "For heaven's sake, Augusta, don't you see anything wrong with the insane idea of holding your own funeral?"

Aunt Gussie pressed her lips into a threadlike line. "I will not be shouted at like an idiot child, Claude. I'm quite ready to admit that I may be neurotic, but I am not insane."

"Just what," said Judge Riley,

his voice a little sad, "is the idea behind your plan?"

Aunt Gussie took a long drink from her bottle of beer. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and said, "Have you read Matthew Arnold, Judge Riley?"

"Can't say that I have" observed the judge.

"Here is one of his thoughts that sums up my feelings," Aunt Gussie said. "It goes: 'Spare me the whispering, crowded room, the friends who come and gape and go, the ceremonious air of gloom—all, which makes death a hideous show.'"

"Let's forget about funerals for the moment," Claude said. He turned, smirking, to face Aunt Gussie. "Do you remember this afternoon? You told me you and Buddy were going for a little hike in the woods, to tidy things up a bit. What did you mean by that?"

"Poor Claude," Aunt Gussie said. "With all your fine college education, you learned nothing. Yes, I go into the woods very often. I go to touch the trees, the rocks and leaves. I delight in feeling the vibrations of living things go through me. Whenever necessary, I rearrange the forest. I neaten it up after careless hikers disarrange its symmetry. I see a log or a rock out of place and I fix it."

There was a long moment of dead silence. Then Judge Riley made those same clucking sounds deep in his throat again.

"Miss Gorman," he said. "Augusta. You—you get vibrations from the trees?"

Aunt Gussie nodded happily. "I get vibrations from all living things." Her sweet face didn't change expression as she said, "And right now I am getting very disturbing vibrations from you two gentlemen. This whole evening has been a preposterous affront to me. You've come here with a contrived and preconceived notion of my actions, to somehow profit from it, I imagine."

Judge Riley leaped up from his chair. He drew himself stiffly erect.

"Are you trying to imply," he roared, "that my visit here was prompted by some ulterior motive?"

Dumb as I was, I didn't understand all the words, but I knew Aunt Gussie wasn't helping her own cause none.

"Oh, simmer down, Ben Riley," she said. "I know enough about your shady real estate dealings with my brother to have you run out of town on a rail."

Judge Riley spluttered, his face all screwed up. "I will not listen to this insane chatter another moment!" he cried. "Claude, will you be good enough to drive me home?"

Listening to them, the more I thought about it the slimmer poor Aunt Gussie's chances seemed. For a wild, prayerful time I'd hoped she could somehow talk them out of their plans. But she'd wrecked that hope. She'd burned her

bridges behind her for sure.

In Judge Riley's frame of mind, I wondered of he could wait until next week to have her sent away and locked up for good. Much as I hated to even think about it, I knew I'd have to go through with my plan. I just couldn't let it happen to poor Aunt Gussie.

"Will you drive me home?" Judge Riley repeated.

Old Claude was slumped down in his chair, his face all twisted and his breathing raspy.

"This whole thing has upset me so," he moaned, "I'm in no condition to drive. You take my car, Ben. I'll call a taxi when I'm ready to leave."

Judge Riley snorted and stormed out of the house without so much as a fare-thee-well. Claude was beginning to recover control after the first shock of the wild conversation. I tried not to look at Aunt Gussie, knowing what I was about to do, but I couldn't help myself.

Catching my glance, she said, "Be a good boy, Buddy—fetch Claude and me something to wash away the bad taste of all this talk."

I looked at her hand holding the empty beer bottle—the strong, sure hand that could tear away at crabgrass one minute and gently stroke a fevered brow the next. I saw her slim, straight shoulders and remembered the times she'd scampered up the stepladder to hand me heavy bundles of roof shingles. Then I looked deep into her bright

blue eyes. The same merry twinkle was still there, and she hiccuped moistly and winked at me. It liked to tore my heart out.

I hurried into the kitchen and took the cap off a bottle of her homebrew beer. Instead of pouring Claude a glass of his smelly old apple brandy I just took the whole bottle. I figured he'd need more than one stiff drink. When I'd done what I had to do, I put it all on a tray and brought it back into the parlor.

Claude poured himself two glasses of brandy and gulped them down before Aunt Gussie had a chance to raise her bottle. She smiled sourly at him.

"You're not very polite, Claude," she said. "I thought we might enjoy a drink together before—"

"Before what?" Claude interrupted.

"Before you do what you have in mind," Aunt Gussie said.

Claude's face turned pale. He poured another drink and lifted the glass.

"I have nothing nasty planned," he lied. "I wish you nothing but the best, Augusta. Let's drink to that."

Aunt Gussie lifted the bottle of beer. Then, quite abruptly, the expression on her face changed.

"This feels chilled," she complained. She put the bottle down. "Cold things make my stomach queasy. Claude, be a dear and pour me some of your brandy. That should warm me."

I watched Claude pour, my eyes bugging out at this unexpected turn of events. This wasn't what I'd planned at all. Aunt Gussie was supposed to drink her beer!

She had the glass of brandy up to her lips before I could make myself move.

"Don't touch it," I yelled, knocking it out of her hands.

Aunt Gussie stood up. She grabbed at my hand and shook me so hard she liked to jarred my teeth out.

"What is it, Buddy?" she cried. "What have you done?"

I came apart then. Everything had gone wrong. Sobbing wildly, I said, "I didn't want to hurt you, Aunt Gussie. It was him I was after—Claude! I knew it would grieve you to lose him, but I had to do it. He was going to sign the papers to have you put away and locked up for crazy. I crushed up them leaves you told me to stay away from. Oh, Aunt Gussie, I put poison in his brandy bottle!"

"Poison?" She sniffed at my hands she was holding in her own. She was quiet for a time, then she cried, "Oh, Buddy, how could you? That oleander is a deadly poison!"

"Oleander?" Claude's voice was a shrill screech.

He jumped up out of his chair. He swung around two or three times, aimless, making loose-legged dancing steps and clutching at his chest. He dropped the empty brandy glass and reached up at the air like

he was trying to find something to hang on to. Then he crumpled up and fell heavily to the floor. He twitched once, then laid real still.

"Aunt Gussie," I hollered, "there's something I have to explain."

"Don't you say one blessed word," Aunt Gussie told me. "You march straight up to your room. And don't you stick your nose out until I tell you to. Hear?"

"Yes, ma'am," I said, and I slunk off to my room upstairs. I left the door open a crack and listened as she called the doctor.

After what seemed a lifetime later, I heard Doc Adams say, "It was a heart attack for sure, Miss Augusta. I warned your brother several times about his high blood pressure. But he wouldn't listen or take care."

"I know," said Aunt Gussie. "Claude always was a stubborn and excitable man. Then too, he had very bad vibrations."

"I'll make out the death certificate and notify the funeral home," Doc Adams said. "Will you be all right?"

"Of course I will," said Aunt Gussie. "I'll just have myself a short beer and start making plans."

"Plans?" said Doc Adams.

Aunt Gussie nodded. "I figure we can have Claude's wake on Tuesday night, and the burial on Wednesday morning. That way it won't interfere with my wake and funeral at the end of the week."

It puzzled me that Doc Adams didn't seem surprised or shocked at what she said. But I guess he understood her better than most.

Another thing that puzzled me considerable was the fact that Aunt Gussie had told Claude I'd crushed up the oleander leaves. I mean, after sniffing my hands the way she had, she should have known it just wasn't so.

Dumb as I was, I'd crushed up the jasmine leaves!

NEXT MONTH

MURDER IS NO MAN'S FRIEND

A Great New Novelet

By WILLIAM JEFFREY

The ways of a killer are dark and hidden, and few men live to solve their secrets. But there was one chance. Flagg nodded, drew his .38 . . .

To live was easy. To die—it was so hard . . .

THE BUTCHER IN THE HAYSTACK

by FRANK D. McSHERRY, JR.



THE BUTCHER must be one of them," said a grim voice. "But which one? The ship's sailing in a few minutes. We'd better find him soon."

Ernest Calvin followed the voice

up the ladder to the bridge deck of the tramp steamer *Berengaria*, marching his long thin form around the bridge house and toward the five men at the rail.

They were neatly dressed in busi-

ness suits despite the heat of a summer noon in Marseilles harbor. Four stood ramrod straight, almost like soldiers at attention; one, a short pudgy man in his sixties, lounged sloppily with elbows on the rail. Calvin walked directly to the lounging man.

"Inspector LaSalle, I'm Ernie Calvin, New York police. Came over to learn something about French methods, an exchange agreement. Uh, I have a letter of introduction here."

"How did you know I was Inspector LaSalle?" asked the pudgy man. "We have not met before, I think."

Calvin looked faintly embarrassed. "Well, four of you were standing around straight as soldiers on parade. You were the only one not at attention, so I figured you had to be the boss."

"Oh. Well, you will not get a good impression of French police methods today, I am afraid. We know that Johann Schmitt is aboard this ship and in four full days we have failed to find him." LaSalle slapped the hot metal rail in disgust. "Failed! Completely!"

Calvin snapped his fingers. "Hey! That Schmitt, the Butcher of Malthusen? The Nazi Party boy who ran all those surgical 'experiments' on concentration camp inmates — and always forgot the anesthetics?"

"Yes. There were many Frenchmen at Malthusen," LaSalle said grimly. "My brother died there."

Calvin said nothing.

"We thought," said LaSalle, after a while, "for a very long time that he died in the ruins of Berlin with Borman. Actually he escaped and for several years now has been the chief of the secret police of a small Balkan nation. A revolution began there four days ago and Schmitt left on this ship. But the woman he left behind contacted us. She will identify him for us, turn state's witness, but it will be weeks or more before she can get there. By then Schmitt will be safely in Argentina."

"He's a stowaway?" asked Calvin.

"No," LaSalle said. "In the past four days we have searched this ship from crow's nest to bilges. We have opened every piece of cargo big enough to contain a man. No hiding place. No Schmitt."

Calvin folded his long form like a jackknife and leaned on the rail beside LaSalle. Thoughtfully he watched the crew unloading below.

"He's posing as one of the ship's crew then."

"Yes. He's not the radio operator, engineer or engine room crew, or any of the officers, anyone with a job that takes years of training and experience to learn. The stewards are all too young, the doctor's too old. Unfortunately we have no photo of him, recent or otherwise."

"You must have something to go on."

"Very few people saw Schmitt at work and lived to tell about it. But

those few reports are all twenty years old. A man can change very much in twenty years. He can gain or lose weight, change his posture, even gain or lose a little height. Perhaps plastic surgery too — who knows?"

LaSalle sighed grimly. "Twenty-four years ago his hair was black, eyes blue, complexion ruddy, body stocky, weight about one hundred and ninety. Look."

There were half a dozen men in the cargo hold, four more on the boat deck above. In the hold a fat bald man puffed as he heaved at a huge crate. Two chunky, muscular younger men tugged with him. Another chunky man, much older, sat on a bale playing a harmonica and keeping time with a swinging hand.

A man with a scarred face and a skinny man pulled at another bale to get it into position for the cargo hook suspended from above. An old man with bushy white hair operated the winch on the boat deck above, pulling the bale up and over the ship's side where gendarmes poked into it. Apart from the bald man and the white-haired one, they all had black hair.

"They're all blue-eyed too," said LaSalle. "It's usual in that part of the world."

"Get any help from the crew?"

"They've all got families back home. Schmitt was chief of the secret police, and no one knows yet who's going to win the revolution.

Naturally we got nothing from them."

"Well, if you've got no photo of him, no fingerprints, no description more recent than a quarter century ago, then how do you expect to find him?"

"At last," sneered one of the other detectives, "the great American has realized some of our difficulties. Of course, for him it is a simple problem. Doubtless he will solve it for us in minutes."

LaSalle's face turned iron. "You are not showing the proper professional courtesy to our friend from overseas, Jules."

He turned to Calvin "Jules is disturbed and with reason, monsieur. We have orders from the Quay d'Orsay to let the *Berengaria* sail at noon. We have held her as long as we legally can—longer in fact. So we must find Schmitt soon or not at all."

LaSalle looked at his watch and despair shadowed his face.

"In fact, our time is up—now."

The ship's whistle screeched. A metal voice squawked from the P.A. system: "All ashore that's going ashore. All ashore—"

The quick drumming of feet on the metal ladder and a rattle of orders told them the captain was heading for the bridge. He looked gloating.

LaSalle shrugged helplessly. His iron face melted, left him looking years older. He spread his hands in an uncertain gesture and said hope-

lessly, "You see our difficulties *Monsieur*. Well, if there is any help you can give us . . ." He started to turn away.

Calvin gripped the rail hard, closed his eyes, and thought fast.

"If the crew were concealing Schmitt, willingly or otherwise, they'd want to get in and out of port—this port especially—as fast as possible. Refuel, unload, scam. So probably they were unloading as you came aboard, right?"

"Yes."

"Okay," said Calvin. "Are all the crewmen down there doing the same job they did when you came aboard? Boy with the bushy white hair operating the winch, the fat baldy shoving crates around, chunky old guy doing his bit on the harmonica, top side crew working topside then as now? Nobody changed places or jobs?"

LaSalle looked carefully down at the boat deck and the still open cargo hatch. One last bale was riding up and over the side. Then the winch operator swung the winch back and secured it. The boat deck crew picked up the cargo hatch and

began to slide it over the hold. The crew in the hold sat down and got out cigarettes.

"Yes," said LaSalle finally. "Yes. I am sure. They are doing what they did when we first came aboard. They have not changed any in four days. Why?"

"Because," said Calvin, "in that case, I know now which one is Schmitt."

One of the men in the hold looked up as the cargo hatch stopped closing and slid back. Three men with grim and terrible faces came down into the hold and straight toward him.

Calmly, but without wasting time, he got up and turned to his left, and saw two more men coming toward him. He turned his harmonica upside down, took the little white pill that fell from it, and died before they could reach him.

"How did you know?" asked the captain.

Ernest Calvin said, "He was a chief of the secret police, a big wheel. Who else would be sitting down while everyone else was working?"



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THE QUIET LIFE

by CRAIG RICE

*Somewhere out there a dead man
waited for his vengeance. John Malone
waited out there also—lest the wrong man die!*



DEPARTMENT of LOST STORIES



For many years Craig Rice and her formidable John J. Malone enthralled mystery-crime readers all over the world. Her pen is stilled, but the memory of her stories will last as long as trackless Murder prowls the fictional night and crimes stay unsolved within the reach of John J. Malone and his friends in crime. The reputation of Craig Rice in this highly specialized field rests permanently secure through the tales she wrote in the thirties through the fifties. "The Quiet Life," first published in this magazine, is an excellent example of her uncanny ability to combine the humdrum with overtones of horror and never-ending excitement. From time to time, in this magazine you will see the DEPARTMENT OF LOST STORIES. When you do, read with care and discrimination. You will be reading a story which, whatever its field, whoever its author, has been revered and remembered as too good to be forgotten. "The Quiet Life" is one of these. You'll remember it!

THE EDITORS

THE VOICE HAD been smooth, mellifluous, even cultured. It had sounded as though it belonged to a Harvard educated judge, a British motion picture star, perhaps the model of distinction for a talking whiskey ad.

"Thank you very kindly, sir. I am honored," said John J. Malone, signaling the bartender. "Rye and a beer chaser, please." He turned to

thank the source of the unexpected invitation.

The dulcet syllables of the drink-buyer were the property of a smallish, nondescript-looking man, slightly bald, with a fringe of greyish-brownish hair, pale blue eyes behind rimless glasses, and a prominent, pinkish nose.

The smallish man's coat and pants didn't quite match, instead of

a vest he wore a dingy brown buttoned sweater, and a faded knit scarf concealed whatever collar or tie he might have been wearing—if any. He was further adorned by a truly splendid black eye.

Malone recognized him immediately as Sam “The Finder” Fliegle. The little lawyer held out a cordial hand in greeting. By way of conversation, he uttered a few routine pleasantries about the weather and the coming fights, and tactfully refrained from asking questions about the colorful optic.

One of the many things he had learned, in long years of practicing criminal law in Chicago, was that a man’s black eye was his own private business—also, that questions or comments concerning such a shaded lamp seldom created a friendly or pleasant atmosphere.

But Sam the Finder was not in a reticent mood. “Charlie Binkley gave it to me,” he said, pointing to the royal purple orb. “He was trying to serve me with a paper.”

Malone’s eyebrows rose a half-inch. While Charlie Binkley was a most unpopular man, even for a process server, he had never been known as a belligerent one. Furthermore, whenever belligerence was involved, Charlie, like other members of his profession, was usually on the receiving end.

“So,” Sam the Finder said, “I’m going to need your services, Malone.” He added, “This time Charlie has gone too far.”

The little lawyer’s eyebrows rose another half inch at that one. Law-suits were hardly what he expected from Sam Fliegle, not in such a case. A thorough going-over in an alley with brass knuckles and saps, yes—a hair-combing with a baseball bat, perhaps. Sam had just the boys who could tend to such chores. But a lawsuit—never. Sam the Finder just was not the type.

“I know what you’re thinking,” Sam the Finder said, in that shockingly beautiful voice. “I’m not going to sue him. Charlie will be taken care of, never fear, but not in the courts of law. I want your services for something else.”

Fliegle smiled, and Malone for some reason didn’t entirely like the smile. Sam the Finder added, “Tomorrow morning, at your office?”

Malone nodded. A client was a client, especially just then. Not only were the John J. Malone finances rapidly plunging toward what threatened to be an all-time low, but life had been entirely too quiet of late. Besides, he liked the little man—even littler than himself.

“Tomorrow morning will be fine,” he said.

Malone finished his drink and put the glass down on the bar. He was bored with the Blue Casino, had, in fact, been regretting the treachery of fate that had brought him there in the first place when Sam the Finder had appeared. He had come with a party of five, a party that included a tender-eyed,

slender thighed blonde from a new show in town. His head had buzzed with plans, and his spirit soared with expectations for turning it into a party of two as the evening went along.

Fate in the shape of one of his companions—male—had tricked him, and things hadn't worked out that way. Hence, a party of one and very tired of it, he had been making up his mind to abandon the Blue Casino for Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar, where at least he could be bored and lonely on the cuff.

Therefore, Malone said good night to his new client and moved toward the door.

Sam the Finder trailed along, saying, in his impeccable accents, "I'm leaving myself, Malone. Delighted to drop you wherever you're going."

Malone, too, was delighted. Outside, it was a dreary, dismal night. Indeed, even in good weather, he preferred to confine his pedestrian activities to crossing sidewalks.

In spite of Sam the Finder's Skid Row apparel, the car that was brought around to the door by a uniformed chauffeur was a satisfactorily splendid black Cadillac limousine. Malone eyed it approvingly. This was the way he preferred to see his clients transported. He remembered, also with approval, that Sam the Finder was known to be anything but a miser.

Certainly, Sam was not a poor

man. His choice of clothing was therefore a matter of either preference or indifference. Malone considered it his client's own business, like the black eye, which almost matched the paint job on the Cadillac.

However, the eye became again the topic of conversation as the big car slid noiselessly away from the curb.

"Charlie poked it with the papers he was trying to serve," Sam the Finder said. For the third time, Malone looked at him with mild surprise.

"He'd been chasing after me for two days, trying to serve me," Sam continued. "Finally, he decided to do it the easy way and came out to the house and rang the doorbell. I opened the peephole to see who was at the door. He got very smart indeed, rolled up the papers quick and shoved them through the peephole—right in my eye!"

"Legal service," Malone said. "The papers must touch the person of the party being served."

Sam the Finder flashed him a quick glance, then said, "The law also states that the party serving the papers has to be able to depone, or testify, that they reached the right person. Which Charlie cannot do. I could see him, but he couldn't see me."

Malone thought that over, decided Sam the Finder was right. "What are you planning to do about it?" he asked.

"Nothing," Sam the Finder said. "That's the whole point. When the hearing comes up tomorrow, to decide whether or not Harry Brown got a bad deal when Mike Medinica sold him the All-Northwest Chicago Boxing and Wrestling Club, I'm not going to be present."

"Legally—" Malone began.

"Legally, Harry Brown can't prove a thing," Sam the Finder said. "I'd be out of Chicago right now, except that I've got a little business to tend to first." The big car slid to a stop in front of Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar. "I'll be in your office in the morning, and then I'm leaving on a business trip—a *long* business trip."

The shabby little man opened the Cadillac door and smiled amiably at Malone. "Don't worry," he said. "It's a simple little matter, easily handled. I just want to leave certain things in the hands of a lawyer when I go on that business trip."

Joe the Angel noted the size and splendor of the car that delivered Malone. He, too, smiled amiably and said nothing about the size of the bar bill.

"Sam the Finder," Malone said, saving Joe the Angel the trouble of a question. "Wants me to handle a little matter for him. I'll take rye."

"A big man," Joe the Angel said with a certain reverence.

Malone nodded gloomily, and sighed deeply over his whiskey. He was worse than bored, he was bored with being bored. The recent quiet-

ness of life, with its consequent, concomitant lack of clients and equally concomitant lack of funds, was getting on his nerves. Not so much the lack of funds—he was used to that problem and would inevitably find a way to meet it.

There was, for instance, a poker game tomorrow night at Judge Touralchuk's duplex apartment that ought to help materially. It was the very quietness itself that bothered him. Malone to be happy, needed a certain amount of action around him.

He thought about Sam the Finder. A strange little man, and Malone remarked as much to Joe the Angel. Joe the Angel went on polishing glasses and said, "My cousin Louie says Sam the Finder learned to talk so good from his father, a college teacher."

"Your cousin Louie should go soak his head," Malone said amiably.

He hated to disillusion Joe the Angel, but truth was truth—outside of a courtroom. He said, "Sam got hold of a correspondence course in better English on a bad debt, and didn't want to waste it. So he studied it himself, including the phonograph records."

Not, he reflected happily, that the little man was a miser, Sam the Finder had a large, luxurious suburban home, as well as a huge country place in Wisconsin. His lovely young red-haired wife wore diam-



onds as good, and at least as large as any lady in town.

It was a known fact that there was not merely the one, but several Cadillacs. Sam dressed the way he did because he always had, and because his apparel had come to carry, at least in the wearer's eye, a certain mark of distinction on a level trademarked by Brooks Brothers suits and Countess Mara ties.

Malone was still meditating on Sam the Finder's personal life, when the telephone rang. The call was for Malone. The caller von Flanagan—a decidedly *anguished* Captain von Flanagan.

"Malone," he said in tones of pure desperation, "I'm in Harry Brown's apartment. Get over here right away. There's trouble."

Malone asked what kind of trouble.

"I can't tell you over the phone,"

von Flanagan replied curtly. Then, in a lower voice, "There's been a murder."

"Call the cops," Malone said with a certain irony.

Von Flanagan didn't appear to notice the thrust. He said earnestly, "I'm going to, soon as I hang up. Malone, I need you—*now!*"

Malone hung up, reflecting that things had come to a pretty pass when the head of the Homicide Bureau summoned a lawyer to the scene of a murder before he called the police. He inspected his wallet, borrowed an extra five from Joe the Angel for mad money, hailed a taxi and was on his way.

II

A POLICE CAR screamed up the street behind him as he crossed the sidewalk toward the unpretentious brick apartment building, but Malone beat the cops to the self-service elevator.

On a sudden thought, as he stepped out of the elevator on the sixth floor, he left the door carefully disconnected. He didn't know what was going on, but it occurred to him that von Flanagan just might want a few minutes of privacy before the law—the rest of the law, Malone corrected himself—arrived on the scene.

The door to Harry Brown's luxurious apartment stood open. Charlie Binkley, the process server, lay dead on the floor, his head in a

pool of blood and a bullet hole through his right eye.

Harry Brown sat in an easy chair, slumped down and looking dazed. Captain Daniel von Flanagan stood in the center of the room, looking frantic and rolling of eye.

"Malone!" von Flanagan gasped. "How is this going to *look*? I was *here*! When it happened! How is it going to look in the *papers*? What am I going to *do*?"

"What happened?" Malone asked.

"That's just it," said the homicide chief desperately. "I don't know, Malone—"

"Shut up," the little lawyer said, but pleasantly. "There isn't any time to talk." Or, it occurred to him, for thought either—though it didn't take much thinking to comprehend the uncomfortable nature of the spot the big police official was in. He asked, "Was your being here a factor in—"

"My being here had nothing to do with this," von Flanagan interrupted hastily. "Or with *him*." He pointed to the body.

Heavy footsteps sounded in the hall. "Don't say anything," Malone advised, fast and in a low voice. "You just got here in one hell of a hurry, that's all. Any questions that come up right now—just tell them that *I* called *you*. We'll work the rest out later."

The look in von Flanagan's eyes went far beyond mere gratitude. It promised infinite favors for Malone, favors in times to come.

The heavy footsteps reached the door. A loud and angry voice wanted to know just who the hell had left the elevator door ajar and jammed the cage. For the moment it appeared, this was of greater import than Charlie Binkley's body on the floor.

No one admitted knowing anything about the elevator door, and the subject was dropped for the moment. The two policemen nodded respectfully to von Flanagan. They told him they'd gotten to the scene as quickly as they could, that the technical boys were on the way.

They appeared to assume that von Flanagan had been summoned independently after the killing, that he had promptly called headquarters, that Malone's presence was a matter for the captain's discretion.

For the time being, Harry Brown was the focus of attention. The dapper little man in the pinstriped suit sat nervously tapping a cigarette with his long, slender fingers, occasionally passing a hand over shiny black hair which Malone had always suspected was dyed. Harry appeared to be having difficulty finding the right words.

He finally got his story out. Charlie Binkley, he explained, had come to see him on a matter of private business. Under pressure, Harry admitted, that the "business" had to do with the hearing to be conducted on the morrow. He was anxious to learn whether

or not certain papers had been served on one Samuel J. Fliegle. *What sort of papers?* A summons. *What sort of hearing on the morrow?* The hearing over the fraudulent sale of the All-Northwest Chicago Boxing and Wrestling Club. *And what did that have to do with murder?* Harry Brown grew a little irritable on that point.

"You stand here nagging," Harry Brown said, "and the guy who cut Charlie down may still be in the building. We—" with a quick look at the embarrassed von Flanagan—"that is, I chased after him, but he got away down the stairs. Could be he's still around."

What did this vanished HE look like? Well, it had all happened pretty fast. But he had worn a tan overcoat and a dark hat. And he was tallish. Harry added, "I didn't see his face."

One of the policemen left to search the building, looking weary, doubtful and generally morose at his assignment. The other stayed on for the questioning, continuing to take notes while von Flanagan sat and occasionally wiped his brow.

"We'd finished talking," Harry Brown said. "I was over by the TV set and he was just about to go home. Somebody buzzed the buzzer. I said, 'See who it is, Charlie,' and he looked through the peeper. *Wham!* Somebody shot him right through the eye."

Brown dropped his unlighted

cigarette, started to pick it up, took out another instead, continued with, "I ran across the room and opened the door. It took a few seconds to get it open, because I had to shove Charlie out of the way. I was just in time to see this character in the brown coat go down the stairs. I chased after him, but he had too big a lead. I tried to get the elevator but it was on another floor. By the time I got it, it was too late." He added, half-apologetically, "I guess I got excited."

The police officer muttered something unkind about self-service elevators.

Did Harry Brown have a gun? He did. He produced it without protest to be taken for examination.

That was his whole story. Malone breathed a little easier and observed with wry amusement that von Flanagan did likewise. All the same, von Flanagan was on a hook. And, for that matter, come to think of it, so was John J. Malone.

It would be a simple matter to explain his session with Sam the Finder, who didn't want to appear at the hearing and had no desire for Charlie Binkley to swear—even without legal proof—that the papers had been served. It would be a simple matter for Malone to tell the story of the black eye, which was all too obviously direct inspiration for the method of Charlie Binkley's murder. This story, Malone was sure, Sam the Finder had hardly,

under the circumstances, confided to anyone else. With these facts educed, and a pick-up order sent out for Sam the Finder, people were not going to ask embarrassing questions as to von Flanagan's presence on the scene of the crime.

Despite innumerable differences of opinion, von Flanagan had been Malone's friend since the homicide captain had been a rookie cop, and the famed crimnial lawyer working his way through night school by driving a cab. Now, von Flanagan was on a spot.

On the other hand, Sam the Finder was a client.

It was an ethical problem that could hardly be settled in the limited time at his immediate disposal. So Malone compromised.

He signaled von Flanagan with an eyebrow and managed to have a private word with him. "You can tell the press," he said, both confidently and confidently, "that you know the identity of the murderer, and that you'll have him in custody by noon tomorrow."

Von Flanagan's grey eyes lighted with hope. "You wouldn't fool me, Malone?" His voice was a plea.

"I'll deliver him myself," Malone said firmly. It was a promise, and they both knew it. Moreover, both men knew Malone made a habit of keeping his word. He added, "That's all I can tell you right now."

Not much—but it was enough. Von Flanagan breathed his relief.

"Believe me, Malone, my being here didn't have anything to do with this," he said earnestly. "It was—well, a personal matter. I wanted to find out something."

"You don't have to tell me," Malone told him.

Von Flanagan ploughed ahead. "It don't matter—now. It's about this hearing deal. One of my in-laws has some dough tied up with Mike Medinica and he got worried. He knew I knew Harry Brown, and he thought maybe I could ask a few questions—innocently—and find out if he stood to lose it."

Malone nodded sympathetically. Trust von Flanagan's inlaws to have money involved in a shady deal. He thought over what he knew of the All-Northwest Chicago Boxing and Wrestling Club—ANCBWC for short—and its sale. Sam the Finder had set up the sale, from Mike Medinica to Harry Brown. Now, Harry Brown was howling that he'd been robbed, to the extent of a cool hundred grand in hard money, because certain stipulated concessions had not been delivered.

The concessions were supposed to represent various respectable and legal contracts. However, the private bark around town was that a considerable amount of fight fixing and protection was the real issue, promised by Mike Medinica through Sam the Finder, whose highly profitable profession consisted of setting up shady deals.

These "concessions," the bark had it, had failed to materialize once the sale was completed.

Shooting little Charlie Binkley over the comparatively minor matter of Sam the Finder's appearance at the hearing seemed to Malone rather a drastic method of settling things.

However, Sam the Finder had been known to take drastic steps when sufficiently annoyed. The black eye caused by Charlie's novel delivery methods might be deemed sufficient annoyance, especially since Sam the Finder was also a proud man.

There was comparative calm in the apartment, a calm that Malone knew was unlikely to endure long. He took advantage of it to ask von Flanagan for further details of the events leading up to the shooting.

"Harry and I were talking," von Flanagan said. "I was just trying to find out if my cousin-in-law's dough was safe, Malone. Then this guy, Charlie Binkley, knocked. Harry Brown said it was a private matter, and would I mind waiting elsewhere. I said I wouldn't, and I was very happy to scam into the bedroom. I wouldn't want it to get around, Malone, that I was up here seeing Harry Brown. It wouldn't look too good. You know what I mean . . ."

The little lawyer nodded in perfect understanding.

"So I went into the bedroom. I was looking at a copy of an old

Confidential when I heard the shot. Naturally, Malone, I put down the *Confidential* and looked out. I didn't exactly rush out, Malone, until I saw what was going on—I mean, what *had* been going on."

Malone said, "What *did* you see?"

"I see this guy, Charlie Binkley, dead, just like now. Harry Brown is running down the hall after some other guy, so I go along to help. But the other character, the one in the tan overcoat, gets away. So I come back and begin to worry about what to do. I tell Harry Brown to shut his trap about me being here, and think a little more. Then, I start calling you and got you at Joe the Angel's on the second try."

"A very wise move," Malone told him. He started to add, automatically, "Keep calm, and I'll do the talking." Then he remembered, just in time, who von Flanagan was. He substituted a hearty, "Don't worry, chum."

"Malone!" von Flanagan said anxiously, "You're sure—I mean, absolutely sure—you can deliver the killer by tomorrow noon?"

"I never felt so sure of anything in my entire life." Malone said, Curiously enough, he meant it.

The calm vanished, as Malone had expected, and confusion again took over with the arrival of more officialdom and the press. Malone stood silent on the sidelines, chewing on an unlighted cigar, while

Harry Brown, still nervous, reenacted what had happened.

The little lawyer tagged along, half disinterestedly, while the police again searched the apartment building. Something was bothering him. Moreover, he couldn't put a mental finger on it, which made it bother him the more.

Perhaps, he told himself, it was the sense of responsibility toward an old friend that made the whole affair seem important out of all proportion to reality, and that was the only thing wrong.

III

FINALLY, the excitement was over. Harry Brown was taken to headquarters to sign his statement. The late Charlie Binkley was removed to the morgue. No one remained on the premises but a policeman assigned to guard the apartment overnight and Malone.

The little lawyer had declined von Flanagan's invitation to come along, along with offers of a ride downtown made by various friendly reporters. Nothing impelled him to stay save that vague sense of something wrong, plus an even more vague impulse to search the building on his own, an impulse he tried unsuccessfully to talk himself out of.

Eventually, Malone gave up the struggle and, beginning at the top of the building, worked his way down. The seven floors were ex-

actly alike, composed of two apartments with a long, gloomy hall between, a flight of stairs, a trash drop and a mail drop.

Malone paused at Harry Brown's apartment on the sixth floor to pass a pleasant word or two with Sergeant Zubich, the officer on duty, followed by a brief prowling around the murder premises which told him nothing except that Harry Brown lived exceedingly well, up to and including an assortment of girl friends with expensive tastes in what could best be termed leisure wear.

The basement was a gloomy hole, and by that time Malone was tired, thirsty, and thoroughly sick of the whole business.

It was in the trash bin that at last he struck oil, in the form of a recently fired .32, almost completely concealed by the waste papers it had slipped through when it landed at the bottom of the trash chute. Malone picked it up gingerly with his handkerchief, looked at it thoughtfully, finally slipped it into his overcoat pocket.

Obviously, proper procedure was to take it straight down to von Flanagan's office. On the other hand, by this time, von Flanagan might very probably have closed up shop and gone home. However, the gun was highly important evidence and ought to be in the hands of the police.

But it was late—well after midnight—and Malone's sense of civic

duty could be stretched only so far. Nor was it going to do any harm to delay announcement of his discovery until after his conference in the morning with Sam the Finder.

Malone sighed, buttoned his conscience and overcoat tightly and walked up the basement stairs, pondering the matter of how the gun had gotten into the trash bin. Obviously, the fleeing man in the tan overcoat, hearing Harry Brown racing after him—Harry Brown, and then von Flanagan—had been moved to dispose of the gun in case he should be overtaken.

Something else, something equally indefinable, still eluded and disturbed Malone's usually imperturbable sense of well-being.

Oh well, he decided pragmatically, this too would come to him in time. Malone stood for a moment, shivering on the sidewalk in the damp, chill mist, wondering which direction along the dimly-lighted street would take him most rapidly to a telephone and a taxicab.

Then, miraculously, it appeared that he was going to get a ride after all. A big dark car slid up to the curb, and its door opened silently. Mike Medinica's voice said, "Get in, Malone."

Malone complied gratefully. Not only was he glad to get out of the damp chill, but a few words with big Mike Medinica seemed entirely in order. He stole a glance at the handsome blonde giant who sat

relaxed behind the wheel. Mike was a free and easy spender, who dressed on the sharp and snappy side and was reported to be ardently pursued by whole regiments of females between the ages of six and sixty. *His occupation?* Malone supposed the word *promoter* would do as well as any.

The little lawyer sighed nostalgically. Things were different



from back in the twenties. The big boys were getting refined. He preferred big shots who wore their true colors outside as well as in. But this, alas, was no longer the way of the world or the underworld.

He leaned back, lit a fresh cigar, glanced out the window and exclaimed, "Hey! You're going the wrong way, Mike."

"No, I'm not," Mike Medinica said serenely.

"But *I'm* going downtown," said Malone.

"No, you're not," Mike Medinica told him. "You're going out to Sam the Finder's farm."

Malone thought that over and made no comment. There seemed none to make.

"Just to spend the day," Mike Medinica added persuasively.

The little lawyer protested mildly. "That's—kidnaping," he said.

"Call a cop," Mike suggested. He sounded amused.

Malone thought that one over, too. There didn't seem to be any truly practical way of getting out of the car, either.

Malone was silent for another mile. "Understand," he said at last, "it's a lovely night for a drive, and all that. But, Mike, I've got an appointment with Sam the Finder himself, tomorrow morning at my office."

"Changed," said Mike Medinica, laconic as ever. "Sam's out at the farm now. Waiting for you."

"But . . ." Malone stopped. He

had almost added that he also had an appointment with von Flanagan in the morning, to say nothing of his promise to produce Charlie Binkley's killer by noon—a promise that involved Sam the Finder. Mike Medinica seemed hardly the person to discuss this highly delicate matter with.

However, Sam the Finder was a reasonable man. Malone decided to wait and talk things over with him, get everything straightened out—omitting all mention of the murder, of course—and then get back to town.

Finally, Malone decided that this was no time for small or other talk, and settled down to being merely miserable. The thin drizzle was still coming down, and Mike Medinica drove his big car carelessly over the slippery road, without apparent concern for curves or traffic. Malone was tired, he was cross, and he was worried.

All in all, he was heartily relieved when Mike turned in through the ornate gateway that led to Sam the Finder's simple little twenty-two room country cottage. He felt even better when he was ushered into the cheerful warmth and light of the big living room by Olive Fliegle, Sam the Finder's highly ornamental red-haired wife.

Sam the Finder sat by a comfortably glowing fire, wearing an old-fashioned bathrobe and a pair of carpet slippers. He didn't look downright grim, Malone reflected,

merely a shade less genial than usual. But he rose to greet Malone with a fine warmth of cordiality, bade him to let Olive hang up his hat and overcoat and showed him to the comfortable chair.

"Now listen, Sam," Malone began. He paused to rearrange his thoughts once more and reached in his pocket for a cigar.

Sam shoved a handsome humidor across the coffee table. "Be my guest," he said generously.

In more ways than one, Malone thought bitterly. He tried it again. "Sam, much as I'd enjoy staying overnight, I have a number of things to attend to in town, come morning."

Sam the Finder shrugged his shoulders and waved a careless hand. "Take care of them by telephone," he suggested. "Make all the calls you want. Long distance if you want to. Be my guest."

"But, Sam . . ." Malone managed, by the thinnest of margins to keep sheer desperation out of his voice.

"Make yourself at home. My house is yours," Sam the Finder remained inexorably expansive.

Olive smiled at Malone winsomely from her chair and, for a fleeting and tingling moment, Malone wondered exactly how far Sam intended his hospitality to go. Then he reminded himself that this was enforced hospitality, although the ugly fact had not actually been brought into the open—yet.

It was Mike Medinica who finally brought it to the surface, after a long and awkward silence. "We trust you, Malone," he said, by way of reassurance. "Hell, everybody trusts you. But right now, we don't want to take no chances. Sammy never should have told you how he got that black eye."

"A client's confidences are always sacred," Malone intoned stiffly, "no matter what their nature." That, he realized, went for the murder of Charlie Binkley, too, if the conversation touched that highly explosive matter. "So there's no real necessity for this . . ."

He had been about to say, "outrage, but hastily changed it to, "invitation."

"Malone," said Mike Medinica "this is positively no reflection on your character in any way, and we do not want you to take it as such. But there is entirely too much money involved to take any chances that some damn fool thing might go wrong."

The little lawyer was, in a way, relieved that Mike had confined the reason for his genteel snatch to mere money.

"Besides which," the big promoter added, "there is the very likely possibility that if Sam the Finder should take the stand, certain little incidental items might be mentioned in the questioning, irregardless of the fact that Sam the Finder would naturally keep his trap shut.

Certain of the finer points of the deal might be brought to the public attention, points we consider are none of the public's damn business." Mike drew a long breath and smiled at Malone with revolting amiability.

Little incidental items, Malone though, certain of the finer points of the deal—such as protection for fixed fights and vicious gambling activities. He wondered if Mike Medinica even knew what had happened to Charlie Binkley. In any event, John J. Malone wasn't going to be the one to bring up the subject.

"So," Sam the Finder put in, "tomorrow night, we will drive you back to town. In the meantime, enjoy yourself, Malone. Have yourself a ball."

It was no time for argument, Malone decided. Somehow he was going to have to get back to town by morning, but surely something would turn up. Something was going to have to. This was one time he couldn't afford to let down von Flanagan.

"It's not that we don't completely trust you," said Mike Medinica. "It's just that we wouldn't want to have anything happen to you. So we know you don't mind if one of us shares a room with you."

"Not at all," Malone lied valiantly, still hoping something would turn up. He decided to drop the subject and ride with the punches

for the time being. He glanced idly around the room. "Is that the peephole where you got the black eye, Sam?" he asked casually, looking at the heavy door.

Mike Medinica shook his blonde head. "It was in town, at Sam the Finder's penthouse apartment." He added, "Same type of peephole, though."

Mike might be the eleventh best-dressed man in America, Malone observed to himself, but he still carefully put the word "penthouse" in front of the word "apartment," underlining it ever so little. Ah, vanity . . .

Malone inspected the peephole. It was a standard type, of a sort installed on a great many doors, a tiny affair that could be slid open to permit a resident to peer out and see who was ringing the doorbell, without being seen by the ringer outside. A roll of papers, though, would slip through very easily. *Poke* through, he corrected himself—as, of course, would a bullet. And this peephole was a facsimile of the one installed in the door of Harry Brown's apartment.

Suddenly he knew he had to get back to town, and as soon as possible. Study of the peephole had caused him to remember what had been eluding him at the scene of Charlie Binkley's murder.

He strolled to the fireside as though he didn't have a care in the world. He sat down. His hosts, he noticed with satisfaction, appeared

to be pleased, even a little relaxed, at his easy acceptance of enforced confinement.

Olive broke the silence by suggesting a drink. Malone agreed that a drink would be both refreshing and timely. An idea had occurred to him. It might not work, and it was going to take almost incredible stamina to make it work but, at the moment, it was the only idea he had.

Mike Medinica flashed a white-toothed grin, chuckled and said, "And you don't need to worry, Malone, that Charlie Binkley will up in court and swear that he served the summons on Sam the Finder. He's already been taken care of."

Malone opened his mouth to speak and closed it again, a gesture that made him feel like a goldfish. The subject was not one he cared to pursue—at least, not just then.

Drinks were poured, and the conversation again lagged. At last, Olive rose, yawned stretched sinuously, and announced that she was going to bed. One drink later, Sam the Finder solicitously asked Malone if he weren't getting tired. Malone smiled cheerfully and said that the hour was far too early for him, that he had never felt more wide awake in his life.

Conversation dipped to zero. Finally, Mike Medinica yawned and suggested a little game to pass the time. Malone allowed himself to brighten slightly. However, Sam the



Finder, it seemed, didn't play cards. Parchesi, now ...

Malone decided he could learn parchesi. He regretted that he hadn't brought much money with him, but ...

Sam the Finder, waved objections away. He said, "Your credit's good here, Malone, and we'll play for very small stakes."

Malone said that would be fine, and how about putting the bottle on the table, so they could all reach it.

IV

THE SKY WAS growing perceptibly lighter when the little lawyer leaned back in his chair and reflected ruefully that he'd had no idea there were so many intricacies to the parlor game of parchesi, or that it was possible to lose quite so much money at a child's game in the space of four hours.

However, he had accomplished his purpose. Mike Medinica sprawled on the davenport, one shoeless foot dragging on the floor, his mouth open and snores emerging from it at regular intervals.

Sam the Finder had lasted half an hour longer, but now, at last, he was slumped forward on the table, his head, on its final nod, having just missed the overflowing ashtray at the table's edge.

Putting both men in slumberland had required four hours and a little over three bottles—but neither of them was going to stir much for a while. Malone grinned happily. As for himself—well, he'd know better when he stood up, but at least his head was reasonably clear.

He scribbled an IOU for his \$439 losses of the night's play and propped it up on the table. The money didn't worry him much. After all, Sam the Finder was a client, and there was going to be an implausably large fee involved, under the circumstances.

He rose and tiptoed—quite unnecessarily—to the closet. There,

he retrieved his hat and overcoat, put them on and realized, for the first time since he entered Mike Medinica's big car, that he had a gun in his pocket all along.

Oh well, he thought, things were better this way. It was hardly considered gentlemanly for an attorney to point a gun at a client. No, not even if the client kidnapped said attorney. Things were much better this way—much better. And it had all been a lot of good, more or less clean, fun, too.

He opened the door quietly and slipped out into the chill, early morning air. Somehow, he managed to make his way down the driveway, through the soft, wet slush underfoot, weaving only slightly from side to side.

At the gatepost, he paused and looked back. The big neo-Colonial house looked and sounded reassuringly peaceful.

It was going to be several hours before anyone woke up and came downstairs. Still, the occasion called for haste, not loitering. Malone wondered what time it was. His watch had stopped hours earlier, and the grey sky told him nothing.

"It gets early very dark out these days," he remarked aloud. He began sloggng bravely along the highway.

It was cold and dreary and damp, and the going was heavy underfoot. Malone's head felt strangely weighted, but he was happy as the proverbial lark. Indeed, once he

was safely out of earshot of Sam the Finder's house, he burst into occasional snatches of song. Even a stumble, which toppled him into the ditch, failed to dismay the little lawyer.

There was a total of nine dollars and some loose change in his pocket, but he was cheerfully confident this was enough to take him back to Chicago. Cabs, he knew, were seldom available here in the country, but he'd manage somehow.

A soft-focus sun was revealing itself through the murk orange-yellow and discouraged-looking.

A perfidious patch of hidden ice toppled him into the ditch again. For a few minutes, he lay there, reasoning that this was as good a place as any to catch a quick forty winks. Finally, however, his better judgment returned a negative verdict, and he climbed out again.

If he went to sleep now, Malone well knew, he'd probably sleep until sometime next summer. He recalled gruesome stories of people who had fallen asleep in blizzards and never waked up at all. True, this wasn't a blizzard—it was merely an ordinary little old Illinois drizzle. But sleeping in a ditch was undignified. Besides, he had promised von Flanagan.

As of the moment, just what he was going to tell von Flanagan wasn't entirely clear in his mind. Last night when he examined the peephole in Sam the Finder's door, in a sudden flash of what he still

recognized as brilliant reasoning, he had known everything he needed to know, with enough left over for a sizable tip. Now, the thought had fled his wits as completely as though it had never existed at all. But it would come back, he told himself, it would come back.

The sound of a car in the distance brightened him with prospects of a lift at least partway back to civilization. Then another thought smote him—there was a possibility that Olive Fliegle might have awakened early. She didn't look like the type of redhead who would awaken early, but you never could tell. If she did, if she came downstairs, she just might have set out after him, to bring him back. That would never do, Malone told himself. It would never, *never* do.

He looked around hopelessly for a place to hide. There was a slender fence running along the roadside, and one very small tree, the latter a considerable distance away. This left nothing but concealment offered by the ditch, and Malone was damned if he'd get back into that again. He decided to take his chances like a man. Besides, Olive looked reasonably frail. Frailly reasonable, too, which was even more comforting to think about. He giggled at the word switch.

The car, however, turned out to be no Olive vehicle, but a small pick-up truck, its rear covered by a dingy tarpaulin. It slowed down.

The driver surveyed Malone and finally stopped for him.

Suddenly, Malone realized that he was in no condition, in appearance or otherwise, to meet the public. Especially not after his last tumble into the ditch. Most particularly, this was no time to encounter small town cops, of civic-minded citizens. But it was too late to do anything about such mischances now.

The truck driver, a thin, weather-worn man, leaned forward. "Had an accident?" He opened the car door encouragingly.

"You might call it that," Malone said manfully. He didn't need much encouragement to climb aboard and slam the door before the driver could take a closer look at him and, if he were sensible, change his mind about offering a lift.

"Going far?" the man asked.

Malone opened his mouth to say, "Chicago," and then merely nodded. Finally, he said, "To the nearest cab stand." Then remembering where he was, he decided the remark must have been the wrong thing.

His benefactor drove in silence for a while. Then he said, "You must have come from that Mr. Fliegle's place."

This time, Malone confined himself to nodding.

They turned into what appeared to be a main highway, and Malone felt a little better. He only hoped the truck was headed toward Chi-

cago and not for some alien distance downstate. After a while, he reached into his pocket for cigars.

"Don't smoke," the truck driver said, shaking his head at the proffered perfecto.

Malone put his cigar away. They were quite damp and a little bent anyway.

Thereafter, the drive continued in silence that seemed, to Malone, to bear a mildly unfriendly overtone. Occasionally the truck driver glanced at his passenger out of the corner of an eye.

The little lawyer wondered just what his driver thought of Sam the Finder and his friends, then decided he'd probably be happier in the long run if he didn't inquire.

V

SUDDENLY a cross roads loomed ahead, complete with filling station and a roadside diner. The truck swerved into the filling station and braked to a stop beside a gas pump. The driver got out silently and went inside.

The little lawyer thought fast. He doubted that the pick-up truck was in need of gas this early in the day. He doubted, too, that the driver had stopped merely to pass the time of day with the gas-station attendant. Then instinct took over, and he slipped quickly out of the truck and looked around for a place to hide.

Malone realized almost at once

that there was no cover except for the truck itself. Filling station and diner stood on a bare patch of ground, and there was nothing else, not even a tree in sight. He trotted hastily around the truck, keeping it between himself and the two men in the filling station. Then he climbed into the rear and under the tarpaulin. He was, he discovered, nesting among a sack of potatoes.

A few moments later, he heard voices, and lay very still.

"He's beat it," the truck driver said.

There was mild speculation as to Malone's whereabouts, but not much excitement. For this, the little lawyer was grateful. Finally, the truck driver said, "Well, 'tain't none of my business anyway. The cops have his description now, and I've done my duty. Guess he was just another bum."

Malone settled down as comfortably as he could among the potatoes, and worried. *Where was he?* He had not the foggiest notion. More important, where was he being driven? He peered out from under the tarpaulin, but saw nothing save dreary looking fields and dirty, melting snow. He wondered what time it was. He sighed and wished he dared to smoke a cigar—also that he had one, dry and unbent.

Breakfast, too, would be a joyous fulfillment at the moment. He envisioned, without trying, fluffy



scrambled eggs, fried eggs with yolks like golden moons, rosy-pink ham, a mound of lavishly buttered toast—but, he made up his mind firmly, no potatoes.

Not this morning—perhaps he would never like them again. His waistline would appreciate such an allergy.

Malone never did know just how long the journey lasted. Afterward, he was to proclaim the journey a matter of hours, and long hours at that. There came a time when the truck slowed down, and there were the sounds of traffic around him. Malone peeked out again, saw crowded cars and began to hope for the best.

Finally, the truck stopped altogether. Malone waited. He heard the door in front open and slam shut. He waited a discreet while longer, then lifted the tarpaulin a little. He was he discovered, on some sort of business street. There were a few pedestrians strolling by, and he spotted a lunchroom, a drug-store, a shoe-repair shop and a dime store. No one noticed him.

I can see them, but they can't see me, he thought. The concept seemed important, perhaps the most important idea he had ever had in his life. The only trouble was that he wasn't entirely sure as to its application.

However, it spurred him to immediate action. He slipped out from under the tarpaulin, jumped down from the truck and sped across the sidewalk to the security of the lunchroom. He perched, breathlessly, on the stool furthest from the front and ordered four cups of coffee and two cigars, fast.

The first cigar of the day, plus the coffee, improved not only his physical wellbeing but his wits. He pushed the thought of breakfast into the back of his mind, as something to be attended to later.

He walked back into the washroom and regarded himself thoughtfully in the mirror. True, his hair was hopelessly tangled, he was woefully unshaven, there was a slight bruise on one cheek, his swollen eyes were red-rimmed and his clothes were spotted with mud. Yet it was quite plain to see that John J. Malone was still a fine, upstanding figure of a man.

There were, however, more important matters to be attended to, and there was not time to waste on pure pleasure. He dug out a handful of coins, located a telephone and called von Flanagan.

The police officer's voice had a *thank heaven!* quality, at sound

of Malone. The little lawyer said, "I'm keeping my promise, chum. You might get hold of Sam the Finder and Mike Medinica, out at Sam the Finder's country place, and have them waked up and brought into town. And meet me at . . ." he paused, added, "at Harry Brown's apartment. Never mind where I am."

For that matter, he thought, *where am I?* Not, he hoped, in Milwaukee. Or somewhere in the Indiana flatlands.

It developed, when he examined the cover of the phone book, that he was merely in Evanston, and he breathed a sigh of relief. From the borderline between Evanston and Chicago to Harry Brown's apartment was a reasonably fast taxi ride. He looked out cautiously for signs of the pick-up truck, saw that it had gone and went in search of a taxi.

The cab driver, when he found one, looked at him sourly and with suspicion. "That's a fairly long trip," he said.

Malone indignantly waved his remaining nine dollars under the driver's nose and handed him the entire bankroll and regretted it immediately.

There was no sign of von Flanagan outside Harry Brown's apartment and, for a moment, Malone considered waiting. There was just one question he wished he had remembered to ask the Homicide captain over the telephone. But that

didn't matter now. He knew what the answer would be, because he knew what it had to be. The peephole in Sam the Finder's front door—the tarpaulin on the potato truck—*You can see them, but they can't see you*—It was as simple as that.

He took the elevator to Harry Brown's apartment and rang the bell. It was several moments before he heard the peephole being opened, another before the door was opened.

"It's you," Harry Brown said joylessly. He looked tired and haggard. "Well, come in. Come in!" He slammed the door after Malone, added, "Nice of you to come all by yourself."

Malone suddenly began to wish he hadn't come sans escort.

"I suppose you figured it all out," said Harry Brown, regarding the little lawyer sourly.

"I found the gun . . ." Malone began—and knew immediately that he had made a mistake. He tried to move fast, but Harry moved faster, chopping down Malone's arm with one quick hand and plucking the gun from Malone's pocket with the other.

"Nice of you to bring this along with you," Brown said. A smile appeared on his thin mouth, but it didn't make him look any more pleasant to his guest.

Malone began thinking frantically and hopelessly of ways to stall for time. Von Flanagan was bound to arrive momentarily. He said, "I sup-

pose Charlie Binkley told you he'd sold out."

"I got no time for talk," Harry Brown said. "March, Malone."

Malone marched, still desperately trying to think of a way out. He felt numb.

"We're going to ride up in the elevator," Harry Brown said, almost gently. "I'm going to leave you there and walk down. I'm going to leave the elevator door open, so the elevator is going to stay up there, with you in it. It will be the same gun that shot Charlie Binkley, only this time there won't be any Malone to find it. By the time anyone gets up, I'm going to be gone a long way away from here, and it's going to turn out that I haven't even been near here this morning."

He closed the elevator door. Malone wasn't even trying to think anymore. The numbness had crept into his mind. Harry Brown extended a thumb toward the *Up* button.

At that instant, the elevator started down with a sudden jerk. For a split second, Harry Brown was thrown off balance and, in that split second, Malone dived for him, his numbness forgotten. The gun went off, and Malone didn't care just then whether he had been hit or not—for Harry Brown had miraculously become the truck driver, the filling station attendant and the cab driver, all rolled into one. The little lawyer fought them all, savagely and joyously.

With a sudden bump, the eleva-

tor stopped. Malone's head struck the floor just as he heard the door flung open, and he almost blacked out.

"*He's killed Malone*" von Flanagan yelled.

Malone sat up. "Not entirely," he said in an indignant whisper. Then he lapsed into dignified unconsciousness.

VI

"STOP FUSSING," Malone said crossly. "There's nothing the matter with me—nothing that a bath, breakfast and a drink won't fix right up." He glared savagely at the physician von Flanagan had hastily summoned.

"Shock and exposure," the doctor murmured. "A number of contusions and a nasty crack on the head."

Malone gave him a furious look, told him to go to hell and demanded to know if there was any rye in Harry Brown's kitchenette.

There was, and the alcohol made him feel rapidly better. He soon was able to sit up on Harry Brown's sofa and ignore the doctor. An anxious von Flanagan murmured something about a hospital. Then something about Malone's lying down again. Malone ignored him, too.

Sam the Finder and Bike Medinica sat across the room, and Malone was pleased to see that they looked considerably worse than he

felt. Van Flanagan had done a neat, swift job of getting them to Harry Brown's apartment.

It was not that their presence was absolutely necessary to Malone any longer, but they were still on his client list. Besides, the little lawyer liked an audience at such times.

Von Flanagan finally sent the doctor away. He gave Sam the Finder and Mike Medinica an uncomfortable look. "Harry Brown won't ..." he began. Then, "I mean, nothing must come out, but—"

"Stop worrying," Malone said, cutting him off. "My pals here won't say a word about your being here when Charlie Binkley was shot. In return for which, I'll never tell you, or anyone else, how Sam the Finder got his black eye." He observed the wan, unhappy grin on Sam the Finder's face.

Malone looked at von Flanagan. "I had everything figured wrong. First, I figured you'd seen the shooting. Then I realized you'd only heard it. You picked up the description of a tallish man in a tan overcoat from Harry Brown."

There was a faint pink on von Flanagan's face and Malone added hastily, "Just like witnesses always do."

He lit his second cigar of the day and puffed on it happily, then resumed with, "I didn't know what I was hunting for when I searched the building—I just had a feeling

something was wrong. Then I found the gun. I still figured Sam the Finder had killed Charlie Binkley—in spite of the tall man in the tan overcoat, which certainly wasn't Sam, and in spite of the fact Sam wouldn't have ditched the gun."

Sam said, in a tone of injured innocence, "I never carry a gun anyway, Malone. You know that."

"You're among friends," Malone said. "Besides, Sam, the point is you didn't carry *this* gun." He paused to puff again happily on the cigar. "I finally spotted the flaw in the whole setup. If someone had shot through the peephole, he wouldn't have known who he was shooting, because he couldn't see in."

He paused again, this time for dramatic effect, added, "Get it?" Then, "That meant someone could have been after Harry Brown as well as Charlie. And any number of people might have wanted to shoot Harry, including Sam the Finder and Mike Medinica."

He waved down their protest, went on with, "But the point is, if the shot was fired *through* the peephole, whoever fired it wouldn't have known who he was shooting. And it didn't seem likely that anyone would shoot indiscriminately through a peephole in the hopes of hitting Charlie Binkley, or Harry Brown, or whoever happened to look out the door."

Von Flanagan said, "But when I came out in the living room . . ."

his voice trailed off as comprehension dawned in a rosy flush of embarrassment.

"You saw Charlie Binkley on the floor," said Malone, "lying in front of the doorway. The door was open, and Harry was halfway down the hall—*past* the trash chute, by that time—supposedly chasing a murderer. Which was just what Harry Brown wanted you to see."

Von Flanagan growled, "It could have happened to anybody."

"Happens all the time," Malone told him cheerfully. He drew a long breath. "Charlie Binkley had been bird-dogging for Harry Brown for a long time, in addition to his being a process server. But this time, he decided to sell out to the other side."

At this point, Malone remembered the question he had wanted to ask von Flanagan earlier. He said, "Did Charlie Binkley have any money on him when you boys went through his pockets last night?"

"More than two grand," von Flanagan replied promptly.

Malone nodded. "That was what Mike Medinica meant when he told me Charlie Binkley had been taken care of and wasn't going to testify that he'd served the papers. I should have known it all the time."

Mike Medinica cleared his throat and said, "Of course, *this* is just between friends."

"Of course," von Flanagan echoed. He added, "The hearing

doesn't come under my department anyway."

"So Harry Brown," Malone resumed, "having several reasons for wanting to get rid of his ex-bird dog, saw heaven-sent opportunity. Charlie Binkley had told him how Sam the Finder got his shiner. That was another point. His murderer had to be somebody who knew about Sam's black eye, and that narrowed the field. Von Flanagan was in the next room, and setting things up was easy for Brown."

Malone sighed happily, picked up his glass and said, "Just like finding out what happened was easy for me."

There was a brief silence. Malone thought of the breakfast he was going to have, and the sleep. And there was the pleasant little matter of money.

Sam the Finder spoke up as though he'd been reading Malone's thoughts. He said, "You'll have a handsome fee for this, Malone. You not only accomplished what I had in mind, but you disposed of the hearing once and for all." He smiled. "Though I must admit—you certainly did it the hard way."

Malone yawned, stretched and smiled back.

"Oh well," he said. "Things were getting so dull."

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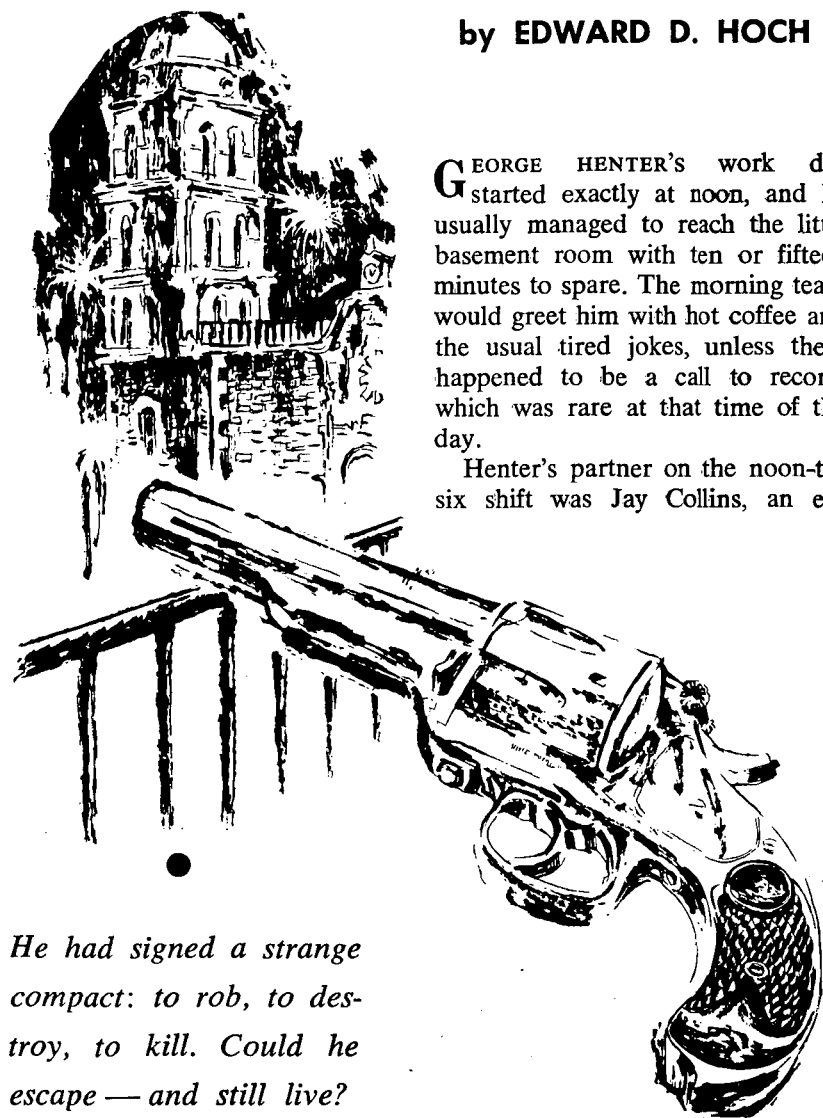
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THE AFTERNOON EAR

by EDWARD D. HOCH

GEORGE HENTER'S work day started exactly at noon, and he usually managed to reach the little basement room with ten or fifteen minutes to spare. The morning team would greet him with hot coffee and the usual tired jokes, unless there happened to be a call to record, which was rare at that time of the day.

Henter's partner on the noon-to-six shift was Jay Collins, an ex-



He had signed a strange compact: to rob, to destroy, to kill. Could he escape — and still live?

C.I.A. field operator who'd been forced into more sedentary work following a nervous breakdown. He was in his early forties, already nearly bald, and with a bland, easy-going disposition that Henter liked. He couldn't imagine the man ever having had a nervous breakdown.

Collins came in just after noon, as the others were leaving. He mumbled only a few words to them before settling down at the desk opposite Henter.

"Sorry I'm late," he said. "Anything doing?"

Henter twirled the dials, listening for the telltale click of a phone being dialed. There was nothing. "They say it's been quiet all morning. They only taped a half hour or so all shift."

"Quiet. That's the way I like it."

They worked four two-man shifts in the little basement room six hours each, starting at midnight, six a.m., noon, and six p.m. at night. There was a different schedule for weekends, but that didn't concern Henter and Collins.

They were employed by the National Security Agency to listen in on telephone calls made to and from certain foreign embassies in Washington. When the calls fell into a number of predetermined categories, the crew on duty tape-recorded them for future study by some unnamed officials.

In actual practice, the men usually taped everything, erasing it if it proved routine or unimportant.

Technically, their job was illegal, but how could anything be illegal when the government paid you to do it?

Unlike Collins, George Henter had never served with the C.I.A. or any other intelligence group before taking the job with N.S.A. After two frustrating years at college and army service in Korea, he'd taken a job with a private detective agency in New York and learned the art of wire-tapping through the late fifties and early sixties, before the courts began to frown on such practices. He'd drifted to Washington and been snatched up by the government, always on the lookout for bright young men with special skills.

"Want a sandwich?" Collins asked at one point, around two o'clock.

Henter shook his head. He'd just run off a tape of a fairly well-known writer phoning a Middle East embassy for an appointment. It was probably nothing, but it must be passed up the ladder for evaluation.

"Not now, thanks. It might get busy."

Collins leaned back in his chair. Something was coming over one of the lines, but they were using a scrambler phone and nothing could be understood. "Damned scramblers are going to put us out of business."

"Never," Henter laughed. "There'll always be people talking."

Afternoons were fairly good for listening, though it was the team on the evening shift which most often

came up with usable tapes. Evenings seemed to make callers more free with their words, perhaps because they were phoning from homes or telephone booths where scramblers were not practical.

At ten minutes to three Henter took a routine tape of a conversation between the Russian and Indian embassies. It seemed only to concern arrangements for a forthcoming diplomatic reception, but it was standard practice to send all such tapes along for evaluation.

"Things are picking up," Henter said as two more calls came in quick succession. Their listening post covered only one geographic area of the city's embassy colony. Other teams in other locations would be working now too, screening the afternoon's calls, separating the wheat from the chaff.

They hit a brief lull just after three, when secretaries would be away from their desks on coffee breaks. Even embassy personnel did not like to dial their own phone calls.

"You know," Collins said, lighting a cigarette, "I've been in the intelligence gathering business, one form or another, all my working life, and I've got damned little to show for it. Even the house went to my ex-wife."

Henter could understand, because his own wife had recently left him. He often found himself wondering if Collins' divorce had caused his nervous breakdown, and if the same

fate might be his. He missed Angie, especially when he returned to the apartment in the evenings. He didn't really think he was the sort to have mental problems over it.

"I guess we're in the wrong line of work," Henter told him, switching on the tape machine as a light flashed to signal a call at the Eleuthera embassy. "We should be wire-tapping stockbrokers on Wall Street. Then maybe we could make some money."

He flipped the loud speaker switch so they both could hear the conversation. When Collins wasn't busy monitoring a call of his own, he liked to listen to Henter's customers.

"What are you wearing?" a high-pitched female voice was asking.

Henter was about to switch it off, having had his fill of party preparations for the month, when another woman's British voice said, quite distinctly. "Don't breath a word of this, Ellen, but I'm getting the old Eleuthera crown jewels out of the vault, just for this. Felix says I'm crazy to wear them, but I'd like to do it just once in my life."

"Oh, Susan Isn't that dangerous? With all the crime in Washington these days?"

"I won't be setting foot outside of the embassy, my dear. I hardly think any bandit would invade the embassy to steal my jewels."

They chattered on about the Friday night affair, which would honor the fifth anniversary of

Eleuthera's independence from the British Empire. Henter and Collins listened in silence to the rest of it, and then Henter rewound the tape.

"Nothing there for upstairs," he said. "Just gossip."

But Jay Collins leaned across the desk to arrest his hand before he could press the *erase* button. "Nothing for upstairs, but maybe something for downstairs. Maybe something for a smart guy who liked jewels."

"Are you nuts?"

Collins merely smiled. "Think about it, George. Think about it. We've both spent time around guns and violence. We could walk in there Friday night and walk out with—how much? A half million in jewels?"

Henter snorted. "I never heard of the Eleuthera crown jewels. They could be glass for all I know."

The balding man kept on smiling. A light blinked on his embassy switchboard and he flicked on the tape recorder without even listening to the conversation. "I was with the C.I.A. in London when Eleuthera was granted its independence five years ago. It's a fairly large island nation in the Caribbean. White government gradually giving way to colored. The old ways giving way to the new.

"About a hundred years ago the island's governor had a necklace, bracelets, rings and tiara made, a small-scale version of the British crown jewels, I suppose. The things

are never worn any more, of course, and I didn't even know they were here in Washington. They could be worth a half million, easy."

"But who'd you ever sell them to if you did steal them?"

"I still have contacts in New York. Don't you worry, George boy, I'd get rid of them. Even at only forty cents on the dollar it would be two hundred grand. A hundred grand for each of us."

"You really are crazy," Henter snorted. He flicked a switch to listen in on another call.

"Am I? Am I?" Collins had stopped smiling. "Crazy like a fox, maybe. You think I belong in some mental hospital with whitewashed walls and bars on the windows?"

"No, of course not! I only meant the whole idea is too risky."

They settled into a strained silence, and no more was said about it that day.

Working only from noon to six had several distinct advantages, not the least of which was the ability to sleep late in the morning. Since his wife's estrangement, Henter had taken to dating a State Department secretary named Mona Blake.

Mona was a lovely dark-eyed girl in her mid-twenties who loved to spend summer weekends on the private golf courses in the Maryland countryside.

"How about golf this weekend?" she asked him that evening, when they'd returned to her apartment after a late dinner.



have said it without a few drinks in her, yet the words stung him nonetheless. The rest of the evening was spoiled, and he went home early.

Henter brooded over Mona's words through much of the night, first considering a different job which would make him more money. But he was trained for little else but investigative work, electronic eavesdropping and wire-tapping. There was money to be made, but nothing like the money awaiting an advertising executive or a good dentist.

In the morning he received a stack of bills in the mail, plus a notice that Angie had instituted divorce proceedings.

"I suppose so." Her habits were rich, her manner expensive. He would have liked to marry her if he could afford it. Perhaps this was just a reaction to the loss of Angie, but he thought it was something more.

"What are you thinking about, George?"

"Oh, about us, I suppose. I'm not getting any younger. I'd like to settle down and marry again."

She glanced at him with a mixture of pity and scorn. "The alimony you'll be paying Angie won't leave you too much, will it?"

"No," he admitted. She had never been told the exact nature of his job, but she knew he was far from wealthy. Minor government jobs were notoriously low-paying.

"Come see me when you can afford it," she said. She never would

GEORGE HENTER flipped on the tape machine and recorded a couple of routine embassy calls. It was nearly two o'clock, and he knew Collins would be getting out his sandwiches in a few minutes. They'd hardly spoken since noon. It had been a busy day Wednesdays often were, for some reason.

"Want a sandwich?" Collins asked finally.

"Yeah. Maybe I would like one today. Didn't have time for lunch before I came." Collins passed him a ham on rye. "You know, Jay, I've been thinking about yesterday."

"What about yesterday?"

"You know—what you were saying about the Eleuthera embassy."

Jay Collins grinned a little. "You mean it? Would you come in with me on it?"

"I might." He munched down on the ham sandwich.

"Only two days," Collins said, thinking aloud. "I don't know if we could plan it all in two days. But we could try."

It had been agreed on, with no more words than that. For the rest of the afternoon, Henter made careful tapes of every phone call the Eleuthera embassy received. The calls were picking up now as the time for the reception drew nearer.

Collins monitored the embassy's outgoing calls, and between them they knew a great deal about the party preparations by the time six o'clock came.

After work they went up to Henter's apartment to discuss their plans.

"We'll need guns," Collins decided. "And masks, too. Leave that part to me."

"I still have a pistol from my private detective days."

"Registered in your name?"

"Yes."

"Then we can't use it," Collins ruled. "You never know what you might have to drop running away."

Henter was a bit uncertain of the balding man. He couldn't forget the nervous breakdown Collins had suffered, and he wondered just how far he could trust his plans.

"Do you really think we can get away with it, Jay?" Henter said.

"Even if we get caught, what does it mean? You think the government would let them put us on trial and

reveal that we learned about the jewels by wire-tapping embassy phones for the N.S.A.?" He snorted at his own cleverness. "Hell, they'd probably put us on the first plane to Brazil and forget the whole thing. Remember how they hushed up that robbery involving a C.I.A. agent a few years ago?"

Henter had to admit the logic of his words, even if a bit reluctantly. "You make it sound pretty near perfect."

"It is! I've been thinking this out since yesterday, and it can't miss. That's what makes it so perfect—they wouldn't dare bring us to trial even if they caught us."

Henter snorted. "They'd probably take us out and shoot us."

"What? For a little robbery? We're not going to kill anyone, don't worry. The guns'll be just for our own protection, and to scare them a little."

"To start with, how do we get into the place?"

"I heard Susan, the ambassador's wife, ordering some flowers for the table today. They're to be delivered at seven, just as the reception is beginning. We'll finish up here Friday at six—we can't leave early and attract attention to ourselves—and get to the florist's shop by six thirty, just as he's leaving. We take his place and deliver the flowers. The rest is easy."

"It sounds too easy," Henter commented.

"The best crimes always are. Hell, with all the stickups in Washington these days, nobody'll think twice about our having inside information. They even held up a church bingo game last month."

"How can we be delivering flowers if we're wearing masks?"

"The masks go on after we're inside. Don't worry about a thing."

Henter poured them a couple more beers. His stomach was jumping a bit and he wondered if it was only nerves. He'd never done anything like this before. Not for love, or money.

On Thursday night Henter had another date with Mona Blake. He picked her up at the apartment, and relaxed with a drink before they went out to dinner.

"I heard from Angie's lawyer," he said casually. "She's started divorce proceedings."

Mona said nothing for a moment. Then she came to him and stood before him with her drink. "I'm sorry about the other night, George. I shouldn't have said what I did."

"That's all right. Maybe it needed to be said. Maybe what you said helped me make a few decisions."

Later, holding her close, he wondered for the first time if they had been the right decisions.

Jay Collins came into the basement room at one minute before noon on Friday, and gave Henter a wink as he settled into the opposite chair and picked up the earphones. There'd been an article in the morn-

ing paper about the embassy reception that evening, with a photograph of Ambassador Courtney and his Boston wife Susan. The article quoted some remarks of his about growing unrest back in Eleuthera, but of course there was no mention of the jewels that Mrs. Courtney would wear that evening.

Henter motioned toward the paper with the picture showing, but Collins made no response until the morning team had left the basement room and closed the door behind them.

"I know," he said then. "I saw it. Too bad she's not wearing her jewels."

"We'll see them soon enough," Henter said.

"Sure, boy."

"How about the other things, the guns and masks?"

"Stashed in my car. We'll leave yours at the apartment and drive mine to a lot near the florist's shop. Then we'll take his truck, of course, for the actual robbery."

"You've got it all thought out."

"Every last detail."

Henter went back to his listening. There was something remarkably omniscient about the ability to listen in on other people's conversations. He'd noticed from the very beginning of the job this strange power that it seemed to give him. He wondered now if Collins had the same feeling, bent over his desk as he recorded calls in the log, listening to other people's secrets, living other

people's lives. Had the all-present ear transformed itself into a mailed fist, a rumbling, unstoppable juggernaut?

In mid-afternoon there was a call to the Eleuthera embassy, to Ambassador Courtney in person. He came on the phone, sounding very British for all their independence.

Henter signaled Collins and switched on the loudspeaker.

"Mr. Ambassador, this is Tomas."

The voice was high and squeaky, like a revolving door in need of oil.

A sigh of something like indifference came from the ambassador. "Yes, Tomas. What is it? Are you in Washington?"

"I am here, not far away. I called to warn you."

"Against life, Tomas?"

"Against death. Your enemies are very close. They may try to kill you at the reception this evening."

There was a crackling on the line, and the ambassador's voice came in again. "Oh, I hardly think so, Tomas."

"Really! I have heard talk! You have enemies back in Eleuthera."

Another sigh. "I must go now, Tomas. I appreciate your concern. I'll send you a check for the information."

"But . . ."

The connection was broken and they heard no more. Henter lit a cigarette while he rewound the tape. "What do you make of that?" he asked Collins.

"Nothing. Some informer in search of pocket money."

"I think we'd better cancel our little plan."

"Cancel?" Collins was immediately disturbed. "Why cancel?"

"If there's going to be any trouble, we don't want to mix with it. Courtney might have extra guards after that warning."

"I doubt it. He didn't really sound as if he believed it."

"Even so . . ."

"Look, George, either that warning was on the level or not. If it wasn't, we've got nothing to worry about. If it was, and somebody is trying to kill the ambassador, it'll just add to the confusion and help our escape. Actually, since we'll be arriving with the first guests, we'll probably be out of there before anything happens. Maybe we'll even save the old guy's life by scaring away the assassin."

But Henter was still doubtful. He realized he'd been having misgivings about the operation all day, and the phone call had perhaps given him the excuse he sought. But Collins was intent on going through with it.

"I can't do it without you," he pleaded. "It'll take two of us to tie up the people at the florist's shop. I can't leave them free to telephone a warning."

"I don't want to do it, Jay."

"Since when did you turn your back on a hundred thousand dollars?"

"He'll have guards at the place."

"Look, we walk in with the flowers, find the wife, take the crown jewels and leave. What could be easier than that?"

"I don't want any shooting," Henter insisted.

"I told you! There won't be any. Look, you got a couple calls. Better get at them."

Henter turned his attention to the board and began flipping switches. He had to get his mind off it. The afternoon would be over in too short a time as it was.

The evening team arrived promptly at six, and Henter walked out slowly with Collins, trying to make it all look casual. He drove his car to the usual parking place across the street from his apartment, and then transferred to Collins' car for the remainder of the trip.

"Do you have the masks?" he asked.

"In that sack on the floor. A mask and a gun for you. Be careful. It's loaded."

Their destination was a small florist's shop in a fashionable section of Washington. Although it was nearly six-thirty on a Friday, the shop was still open, its lights blazing against the settling twilight. They parked the car on a side street a block away and went the rest of the distance on foot. The evening was cool but pleasant, a good night for Washington social functions.

"Can I help you?" the girl clerk asked, glancing up from the counter.



They'd pulled their black cloth masks down from under their hats as they entered, and now Collins brought out the gun. The girl's hand went to her mouth, and her eyes widened. "No screaming!" Collins barked.

"There's no cash," she managed to gasp. "The manager already took it to the bank."

"No cash," Collins barked through the cloth of his mask. "We want the truck."

"It's gone."

"Don't lie. We know you have a seven o'clock embassy delivery."

"It's true! The truck left at six-fifteen to make another delivery first!"

Collins cursed through the mask.

He half turned, a frustrated tiger seeing his entire plan about to crumble. Then, "Can you contact them?"

"I . . ."

"Phone them at the first place. Then tell them you forgot to put a ribbon on the embassy flowers. Tell them anything at all, but get them back here if you want to stay healthy."

The girl was shaking with fright. "I'll try." She went to the phone and they listened to her words. The delivery truck was still at the first stop, and she told the driver to come back. Collins sighed audibly.

The rest of the plan went smoothly. There was a single driver in the truck and he was quickly bound and gagged, along with the girl. Collins dressed in his uniform, while Henter found a reasonably good fit for his own broad shoulders in the closet at the back of the shop.

"They'll really think they're getting service," Collins said as they drove toward the embassy. "Two delivery men for these flowers."

"Yeah," Henter mumbled. The pain was beginning to solidify in the pit of his stomach. He wanted out. He wanted to forget the whole caper.

"Remember to keep the flowers in front of your face going in, until we get our masks on."

It was ten minutes after seven by the time they reached the embassy, a large old house in Georgetown which the government of Eleuthera had acquired five years earlier, when the island gained its independence.

A butler at the service entrance urged them inside with a quick flapping motion of his hands.

"You were to be here no later than seven!" he complained. "The first guests are already arriving."

Collins stepped behind the man and hit him a quick blow with the revolver. The butler toppled to the floor with a sighing gasp.

"Was that necessary?" Henter asked.

"One less we have to worry about."

They slipped on their masks and entered the kitchen area, where servants were busily preparing cocktails and tiny sandwiches. "Everyone freeze!" Collins commanded, moving around behind them with his gun. Then, to Henter, "You cover them while I deliver the flowers. We'll make our escape this way."

Henter leveled his own gun at the butler and cook and three maids, keeping them over against the stove. He saw Collins go through the swinging doors, still holding the flowers up over his masked face. The gun was at his side, held tightly in his other hand.

"What do you want?" one of the maids whined. "Are you going to kill us?"

"We're just after the jewels," Henter muttered, to put her at ease. Frightening girls with a gun and mask was not his idea of kicks.

"There are no jewels," the butler said.

Something began to grow in Henter's stomach, but he put it down. There were jewels, even if this man did not know of them. Or were there?

And did he want them even if they were there?

He went through the swinging doors, after Collins, ignoring the prisoners in the kitchen. He saw the masked figure of Collins in the main reception room, holding a half dozen guests at bay with his gun. And there was the ambassador and his wife, and she wore a simple pearl necklace above her dress and nothing else.

"Collins!" he shouted, because there were only seconds now. With his free hand he ripped the cloth mask from his face.

Collins turned, his features hidden by the mask. He seemed to hesitate, and then he swung his gun hand back in the direction of the ambassador.

Henter shot him in the side and watched him go down, and then walked over and kicked the gun away from his grasping fingers.

The man was tall and slim and blue-eyed, and he said with a slight smile that his name was Smith. He sat at the desk opposite Henter and listened to his story, and Henter knew that his whole future depended on these next ten minutes.

"It was a plot to assassinate the ambassador," Henter began, "because of his statements about

conditions at home. Only they had to do it in such a way that it wouldn't look like an assassination. That's where Jay Collins and his twisted mind came into it. This was exactly the sort of plot an ex-C.I.A. man might devise. The cover story, just like an agent in enemy territory. Collins' cover story for the assassination was to be the robbery, and he had to recruit me to help him."

"Just how did he do that?" the man named Smith asked, making a few notes on the yellow pad before him.

"Someone at the embassy, probably a maid, imitated Mrs. Courtney over the telephone, and mentioned wearing the crown jewels. If I hadn't caught the conversation, Collins would have taped it and called it to my attention later. He knew I was hard pressed for money, and figured he could take me into helping him with the robbery. If he couldn't, he'd lost nothing. There were no jewels, of course, but that was to be the excuse for gunmen invading the embassy.

"Collins would kill the ambassador and get away while I covered the escape route through the kitchen. And it would look like a robbery slaying, not too unusual in Washington these days. Even if the police should grab me, I'd know nothing about the real plot."

"And when you found there were no jewels to split?"

Henter shrugged. "He'd just say it was a mistake. He'd say he shot the

ambassador in a fury when he found out."

"How'd you know it?"

"The butler said there were no jewels, and I believed him. I remembered the assassination warning Courtney had received this afternoon, and I remembered something that had bothered me about the conversation I'd overheard the other day. The woman pretending to be the ambassador's wife spoke with a British accent, but the newspaper said she was American."

The thin man nodded, finishing his notes. "The hospital says Collins will live. He should tell us who the others in the plot are."

"What about me?" Henter asked.

"You don't get a medal, but maybe you don't get prison either.

We can't have your job become public knowledge through a trial."

Henter smiled, "Well, Collins was right about that much, at least. But how will you keep him from talking?"

"There'll be no trial. If he cooperates we'll just send him away someplace where he can't cause trouble."

"Then I'm free to go?"

The man nodded. "Free to go. Report to N.S.A. on Monday morning. We'll try to place you in some less—sensitive position."

When Henter left the building he thought about phoning Mona. It was late, but he knew she'd still be up. First, though, he decided to walk for a while. He knew the streets were dangerous after dark, but somehow he felt this night they'd be safe for him.

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THE MURDERERS FIVE

The Devil's Disciples, they were, the crazy Genna brothers who terrorized Chicago's Little Italy in the roaring twenties. At long last they died, one by one, as they had lived, by the gun, but in the meantime these scowling Sicilians lived to kill and killed to live. They were indeed — devils!

by **DAVID MAZROFF**



AL CAPONE



JOHNNY TORRIO

WHEN JOHNNY TORRIO and Al Capone were plotting the murder of Big Jim Colosimo in 1920, and afterward, when they had formulated the gang that was to come known as "The Syndicate", the Genna brothers were a power in Chicago's underworld.

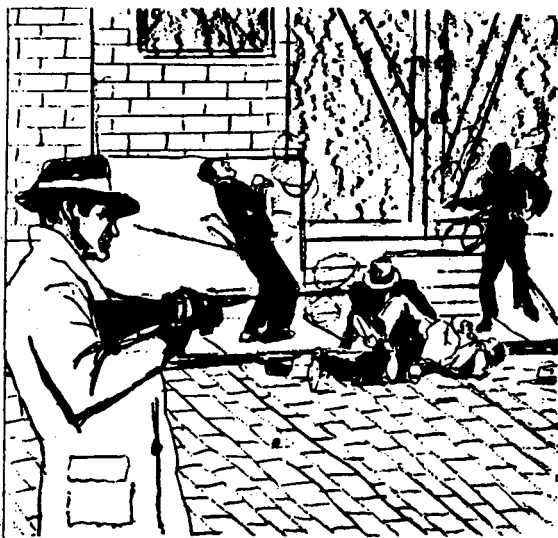
They were a cruel, vicious band, more closely allied than any mob

because they were tied by blood, by the strong Italian bonds which hold brother to brother against the world.

There were six Genna brothers, Angelo, Vincenzo, Sam, Pete, Mike, and Tony. They had nickname, given them by their enemies and by the large number of west Side Italians who feared them and worked for them as alcohol cookers.

THE BLOODY GENNAS SCOURGE OF LITTLE ITALY

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD—HOW FIVE GUN-CRAZED BROTHERS
HELD ALL CHICAGO IN CHAINS OF TERROR



Only Tony was liked and respected because he refused to kill, so only five of the brothers were murderers at heart and in fact.

Angelo was known as Bloody Angelo. A blackhand in his youth, Angelo was identified as the man who stood with straddled legs over the wounded form of Paul Labriola

as he lay on the sidewalk and pumped three bullets into his chest during the political feud in the old Nineteenth Ward in 1921 which cost the lives of twenty men.

In this same feud Bloody Angelo killed John Natti, a saloon keeper who had slain Angelo's friend, Nicola Maggio. It was Bloody Angelo



ANGELO GENNA



TONY GENNA

who killed Joe Larson on the North Side in a hijacking raid. And Angelo also threatened to murder Genevieve Court, a young girl who had been forced into prostitution, if she appeared as a witness against Henry Pine and Phil Maltese, two procurers, in a trial for violation of the Mann Act.

Angelo received a sentence of a year in prison for threatening the life of Miss Court, served it in Leavenworth, and was released shortly before Dion O'Bannion's murder, when that flower fancier and all-around hoodlum and killer was slain in the now infamous "Kiss of Death" killing.

Angelo at the time was twenty-seven years old, a savage and relentless thug and murderer who rivaled the likes of Capone, Jack McGurn, Hymie Weiss, and other sundry sweet-souled gun toters who

roamed the corrupted streets of Chicago.

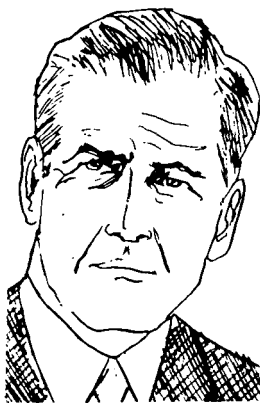
Mike Genna was called *Il Diavolo* or Mike the Devil. He earned his name honestly. He was the youngest of the brothers. The oldest was Sam. Then came Jim, Pete, Angelo, Tony—often called Tony the Gentleman or Tony the Aristocrat—and Mike.

The brothers were born in Marsala, a seaport in the province of Trapani, Sicily, and were brought to Chicago when Sam was ten years old and Mike was a babe in arms. Their father worked as a laborer and as a railroad section hand. Both father and mother died while the boys were still young, and they lived on filth and poverty in a West Side tenement walkup flat.

The boys were black-haired, black-eyed, looked a great deal like Arabs and no doubt had a strong



HYMIE WEISS



DINO O'BANNION

dash of Saracenic blood in their ancestral strain. They were an overbearing, contemptuous lot and generally disliked. Paradoxically, they were deeply religious, went to church regularly, and like Hymie Weiss and Dion O'Bannion, those two lovable killers of the North Side, carried crucifixes and rosaries in their pockets along with their guns and stilettos.

They said their prayers, probably before and after they killed their enemies.

They were secretive, kept their own counsels, resented intrusion by strangers, were fanatically loyal to each other and always dangerous to anyone who threatened one or the other of them. Few were rash enough to threaten one, and none to threaten them when they were all together.

Antonio was the different one

of the brothers. He had a pale, somewhat ascetic face, wore horn-rimmed glasses, which gave him the look of a scholar. He played only a minor role in the Genna vendettas and refused to have anything to do with the hoods and mobsters who did business with his brothers.

He studied architecture, took an avid interest in bettering himself and the conditions of his Sicilian countrymen. He built a better group of homes and apartment houses in the Sicilian colony around Fifty-fifth and South Troy Streets and rented these at nominal rates. He himself refused to live in the neighborhood and made his residence in a suite at the Congress Hotel on Michigan Boulevard. He was a lover of the opera, often entertained opera stars, lived the life of a rich and fastidious dilettante. He could have had his pick of show girls but

preferred to confine his romantic affairs to a small-town girl named Gladys Bagwell, who was the daughter of a down-state clergyman.

He wanted to marry her and would have but he was murdered before he got Gladys, a stunning brunette beauty, to the altar. Tony was far from completely innocent in his brothers' guilts, for he was an integral cog in the machine, a part of the council that approved business deals or the removal of rivals and enemies.

When Prohibition became a law the Gennas put many poor Italians in the tenement house section of Taylor Street to work cooking corn sugar alcohol. There may have been as many as a thousand of these Italians, men and women, cooking alky for the Genna brothers. There were enough so that the Gennas needed a three-story warehouse on Taylor Street to store the weekly output.

No one dared to refuse to cook for them. There were whispers around the settlement that the Gennas were inbred with all the murderous savagery which has characterized the Sicilian bandit for three centuries. It was through the fear of them that they were able to engage almost the entire Taylor Street settlement in their alky cooking enterprise.

This alcohol was sold in two grades. The original drip from the worm, which was 198 proof, sold

for \$6 a gallon. Cut in half to 100 proof, it sold for \$3 a gallon. The Gennas' gross sales amounted to about half a million dollars a month, and their net profits from this was about \$200,000.

It was a common sight to see a queue of some three hundred policemen lined up outside the Genna warehouse at 1022 West Taylor Street each month for their regular graft payments.

That was why the Gennas could operate as they did. Virtually every cop in the district was on their payroll. This was Chicago in the twenties, a wild, bizarre, grafting and corrupted harlot who flaunted her vices before the eyes of a decent citizenry and defied them to stop her.

And who were the tenement district Italians who feared not to work for the Gennas? They were a product of wasted dreams which once had illuminated hope, faith, the self-told promise of America every peasant in Europe held to his heart—the fabled stories that the streets were paved with gold, that great wealth was as common as the fish in the sea, that no one ever went hungry or was cold.

They arrived in New York and from there spread out to all the cities across the breadth and width of the nation, and some of them found their way to Chicago and Taylor Street.

The years brought them intense disillusionment. Most of them were

sick with nameless fears, and with a shuddering revulsion at the filth, the unprivacy of two and three families jammed into a space too small for one. They looked at the rickety wooden houses, the garbage laden alleys behind them and they wondered why they had ever left Italy.

These were the people the Gennas exploited, a people that couldn't subsist on the wages of a ditch digger, a stone worker, a laborer, and so they agreed to cook the alky for the Misters Genna who were powerful in the city, had many friends among the great politicians.

Yes, it was better to do as the Misters Genna asked. Besides the extra dollars were needed for rent, for food, for shoes for the kids. And the Misters Genna, with their dark faces and dark eyes and their suggestion of cruelty and torture, moved among their countrymen with mockery, with an evil rejoicing over their power to capture and enslave the will of the defenseless poor.

Only Tony the Gentleman wasn't hated by the Taylor Street Italians. Tony insisted on a ten cents per gallon increase for them and got it. He was their friend and ally. They asked blessings for him in their prayers. Maybe he was blessed at that. He died quickly when he got it, right in the belly and the heart.

Angelo Genna, the ambitious one, the would-be king, wanted the position of president of the *Unione*

Siciliano in Chicago, which then was held by Mike Merlo, who, ostensibly, was friendly with the Gennas.

Merlo thought the Gennas were his friends. That's where he made his mistake.

Angel knew that Merlo was a sick man and that Mike had spoken many times of retiring. He knew, too, that Joe Aiello, a sneak and double-dealing North Side hood and affiliate of Dion O'Bannion and Hymie Weiss, wanted the presidency as much as he.

Aiello and his three brothers supplied alcohol to O'Bannion and Bugs Moran, and the Aiello alky was cooked by a score of Italian families who still lived in what remained of a section formerly known as Little Italy.

Aiello had only the backing of O'Bannion and Moran, both Irish, and definitely without influence in the *Unione*. Angelo Genna thus held all the trump cards, if he could get Johnny Torrio and Al Capone to back him. He talked it over with Torrio and Capone.

Angelo went to Torrio and Capone's suite of offices in the Lexington Hotel on Michigan and 22nd.

"Mike Merlo is sick. He cannot control the *Unione*," Angelo Genna said. "I am the logical man. That pig Aiello is pushing to get the presidency. You want that pig as president?"

Torrio and Capone exchanged

knowing glances. They didn't want Aiello as president under any circumstances. Neither did they want Angelo Genna. Angelo was too volatile, too stubborn, too quick with the gun. He would cause much trouble.

Torrio said, "Let me think it over, Angelo. This is not an easy decision to make."

"Why not? I am Sicilian. The *Unione* is Sicilian. I am the man for the presidency." He turned to Capone. "You agree, Al?"

Capone never expressed it in so many words but he didn't like the Gennas, and especially didn't he like Angelo. He didn't like their exploiting of the poor Italians, the hold they had over them, the fear and terror they spread, the destruction of their dignity.

Capone was called many things during his lifetime and after his death, but he left legitimate people alone unless one of them insisted on sticking his nose into his business. Capone's planning didn't include the Gennas in the final picture of *The Syndicate*, the ultimate scheme, the finished pattern, the product that was to become the Capone mob. First of all, they could not be handled. Next, their ambitions, as a whole, conflicted entirely too much with his plans, and yet Al Capone wanted someone like Angelo as the head of the *Unione*, a man who wouldn't frown on violence when it was necessary as Mike Merlo did, and who would be in-

dependent of the Grand Council but strong enough to command its full support.

Capone himself couldn't hope for admittance into the *Unione Siciliano* because he wasn't Sicilian and so he would have to work behind the scenes, with a figurehead in the presidency. Angelo Genna wouldn't be a figurehead.

Support of the *Unione* was important because it offered tie-ins with all the top criminal combinations in the country, with men like Joe "The Boss" Masseria, Frank Costello, Joe Adonis and others.

Tie-ins with these men would facilitate connections with the huge smuggling ring that was bringing genuine liquor in from the Bahamas, and from Canada across the Detroit River, narcotics from Europe, Mexico, and the Orient.

Members of the *Unione*, which was in effect the Mafia, had connections and tie-ups with powerful men in politics. This meant valuable protection, if it should be needed.

Capone saw the magnitude of such connections, a coast to coast chain of political authority and influence. And he saw himself as the man behind it.

He said, "Like Torrio just said Angelo, we'll have to think it over. It's a big move, very important. We'll need time."

Angelo didn't like the stalling tactics, said so, but had to be content with the decision made by Torrio and Capone.

The underworld grapevine relayed the information to O'Bannion and Hymie Weiss that Angelo Genna was shooting for the presidency of the *Unione*. To O'Bannion and Weiss this meant trouble, the kind they didn't want. It meant that with Angelo Genna in as head of the Chicago *Unione* Joe Aiello would be out in the cold so far as his control over his alky cookers was concerned. The Gennas would take over Little Italy and the supply of alcohol would be cut off to O'Bannion and Weiss.

O'Bannion called a council of war. In the group were Joe Aiello, Bugs Moran, Frank and Pete Gusenberg, Moran killers, and several of O'Bannion's top men, among them Weiss, Louie Two-Gun Alterie, and Schemer Drucci.

"Them heathen Gennas," O'Bannion said, "are trying to muscle into our territory. I have the word that Angelo wants to head the *Unione Siciliano*. Mike Merlo is a sick man and wants to retire. If he retires or dies and that heathen Angelo gets in as head of the *Unione* we will lose our alcohol supply. We have to get rid of that heathen, him and all his brothers."

"I'm for it," Moran said, "but it won't be easy. We may lose a lot of our own men doing it."

"Not if we pick them off one by one," Weiss said. "We'll put a round-the-clock watch on each one, position them and knock them off. It won't be too hard."



"Yeah," Moran retorted, "and what about Capone? He's with the Gennas. You bust a few caps on a Genna and you have Capone to deal with."

"Not so, lad," O'Bannion replied. "I know that heathen Capone ain't got no love for the Gennas. He won't step into this, mark my word. We'll do as Hymie says, one at a time."

IF THE UNDERWORLD grapevine worked for O'Bannion it also worked for the Gennas. They got word of O'Bannion's plan to knock them off.

Angelo called a meeting of his brothers and relayed what he had learned. "We take that Irish bastard first. Then that Polack Weiss and Alterie, and the rest of them."

Tony said, "Angelo, let's not

rush into this thing. Killings are bad. The public becomes incensed. The newspapers get riled up and print editorials demanding a clean-up of the city. We'll all lose by this."

Angelo thumped the table with his fist. "Tony, what the hell are you saying? You know what you're talking about? *Madre Mia!* You want to be set up like a clay pigeon? You want to be dumped in the street by that bastard Weiss and his killers? No, by God! We get O'Bannion first."

He turned to the other brothers. "I ask for a vote. We get O'Bannion first, yes? Raise your hands."

The other four brothers raised their hands solemnly.

"Good! It is agreed," Angelo said. "I will make the plans. We will call in Scalisi and Anselmi, our good friends.

John Scalisi and Albert Anselmi, the aces of the Genna fighting forces, were two of the most merciless cold-blooded killers Chicago gangland ever knew. Veterans of crime in Sicily, they had only recently come from overseas.

Their callousness was not that of senseless brutes. Both were intelligent, and Scalisi had brains of no mean order. They were abnormal and unaccountable men without nerves, emotion, or heart. They looked upon murder as routine day labor. Other men made their living driving trucks, laying brick, or selling haberdashery from behind a

counter. In much the same commonplace spirit these two Sicilian enigmas earned their bread and butter by assassination.

They were unmoved by bloodshed as a killer in a slaughterhouse who, with a sledge hammer batters in the skulls of steers all day long and goes home serenely at the end of a day's work and sits down to his roast beef and potatoes with a fine appetite. Scalisi and Anselmi were perfect types of gangland murderers, finished craftsmen in deadliness.

O'Bannion, thinking to avert bloodshed after his meeting with his gang, sent word to the Gennas to stay out of his territory and not to do anything to upset the applecart, to let things stand as they were—meaning, of course, that Bloody Angelo was not to try for the presidency of the *Unione*. Angelo treated this warning with a loud and contemptuous guffaw.

"That Irish pig is scared! He sends warnings! We'll send him death! Death!" he repeated. "The Sicilian way!"

Angelo underestimated O'Bannion. The Mick was just as tough and merciless as Angelo. When Angelo sent his trucks into the Near North Side, O'Bannion's territory, the Mick promptly stuck them up, beat the driver helpless, and drove off with the truck and its wares.

When O'Bannion had heisted five of the Genna trucks and done

it without reprisals of any kind, although Scalisi and Anselmi had roamed the Near North Side looking for O'Bannion hoods, Angelo, Mike Sam, and Pete went to the Lexington Hotel to ask for help from Torrio and Capone.

"That lousy Irish pig has heisted five of our trucks and beat up our men," Angelo shouted. "We want your help to knock him off, get rid of him, him and Weiss and Alterie and all the rest of them!"

"You're shouting, Angelo," Torrio said, contempt in his tone for Angelo's coarseness. "I'm not deaf. Talk a little softer."

"You'd be shouting too if that bastard hijacked your trucks. He almost killed a dozen of our boys. We got an agreement to deliver our alky on the North Side. That's the way it was set up, wasn't it?" Angelo demanded.

"That's right, Angelo," Capone put in. "On the North Side, not the Near North Side. What were your trucks doing on the Near North Side?"

The anger Angelo felt swelled the cords in his neck and his face turned a beet red. "They was going to the North Side. How else could they get there?"

"Then how come your boys picked up loads in Little Italy?" Al Capone asked.

"That's a lie. They didn't pick up no loads in Little Italy. They were loaded when they left our warehouse on Taylor Street!"

"That's not the way we got it, Angelo. We got it like I said," Capone replied, "and our information is pretty straight."

"Your information is wrong, Al," Mike put in, his tone soft yet pointed. "You know my sentiments, Al. I dislike all types of violence. However, O'Bannion has gone too far and he must be stopped." He turned to Torrio. "You're going to help us get rid of Mr. O'Bannion, Mr. Weiss, Mr. Drucci, and the others, aren't you, Johnny? That was part of our agreement. Mutual protection. This is the time to use it."

Capone looked over at Frank Nitti and Jack McGum and smiled. Torrio didn't answer right away. He sat in the big armchair by the west windows which looked out onto Michigan Avenue and made a tent of his fingers, pursed his lips and closed his eyes, and then his brow furrowed deeply. He had to make a decision which took guts. But Torrio, bad guy though he was supposed to be, didn't have that kind of guts. Capone kept his keen eyes on Torrio. The Gennas looked from Torrio to Capone and then back to Torrio.

There was a sullen, scowling expression on Capone's face. He hated O'Bannion. This situation was what he had been waiting for through three long years in which he had to take O'Bannion's insults mouthed by him to all who would listen and repeated often through the under-

world, that "Capone was a heathen Dago pimp." Anyone who wasn't Catholic was a heathen to O'Bannion.

When O'Bannion was told that Capone was a Catholic he refused to believe or accept it. "No Catholic would be a pimp!" he retorted. "He's a heathen!"

An odd, feverish impatient urge to kill was written on Capone's swarthy features. There was only one thing Capone wanted Torrio to say, the same thing the Gennas wanted him to say, but Torrio wouldn't say it.

The Gennas stood together in the center of the room, and suddenly the room was filled with a faint reddish glow which came from the setting sun. It may have been a symbol. Johnny Torrio opened his eyes, looked around the room, then focused them on the Gennas.

"I'll talk to Mike Merlo," he said, and his voice wasn't his voice but that of a stranger's, and in it was something of fear, the fear one might know as he makes his first step alone into a never-before-traveled jungle.

Once before he had been faced with the same situation, and in this very room, when he had to give the word to take the South Side O'Donnells, and he had seemed as reluctant then as he did now. Then, too, he had said he wanted to talk it over with Merlo. That was his way of shifting responsibility

for a killing. Capone's mouth was turned down and his eyes narrowed. Torrio's decision to talk it over with Merlo wasn't what he had wanted.

"What the hell do you mean you're gonna talk it over with Merlo?" Angelo shouted, and pounded the table with a first. "Merlo ain't got no push with that Irish bastard. How the hell are you gonna straighten out some dirty son like that? And who the hell is gonna pay for my trucks and my alcohol? Whatsa matter with the business I've lost in the territory? That lousy Mick made an agreement, right here in this room when we had the big meeting, that we had the North Side. If he can't keep an agreement then there's only one thing left to do!"

"I said I would talk it over with Mike Merlo," Torrio said, his tone determined. "This could mean a lot of trouble. We must have an okay. Lots of people downtown have to be satisfied. I'll talk to Merlo tomorrow and he will talk to the people downtown. I'll let you know what he says."

"That's not good enough, John," Mike said. "The situation requires an answer now, not tomorrow." He smiled lazily. "We don't care to hazard the losses of any more alcohol, any more trucks, any more men. That's the way we feel about it."

The tension in the room rose. This was outright rebellion. How-

ever, the Gennas had a sympathizer. Al Capone. He wanted to get rid of O'Bannion. Not for the Gennas' sake but for his own.

Angelo Genna pointed a finger at Torrio.

"I'm gonna give you until tomorrow!" he shouted. "Either you straighten out that lousy Mick with Merlo's okay or you agree to help us take him. That was the way it was agreed. Anyone steps on our toes they step on yours, and the other way around. That's the way it was!"

"You're giving me an ultimatum, Angelo," Torrio replied, and moved around in his chair. "I don't like ultimatums," he said in a flat tone and looked toward Capone for reassurance. Al Capone turned his head.

"One gets accustomed to everything in time, John," Pete Genna said, and smiled that lazy smile of his. "We're protecting our business. The agreement we made with you and the other boys was that you would help us protect it in case any one stepped out of line. Angelo has already said that, but I'm repeating it in case Angelo didn't get it across to you. You're not backing it up. That leaves us only one alternative." He spread his hands in a meaningful gesture. "Only one alternative, John."

Mike Merlo refused to sanction Dion's execution, as Torrio was certain he would do so. Furthermore, Merlo told Torrio that he had the word that the Gennas were



BIG JIM COLISIMO

muscling in on O'Bannion and on Joe Aiello, trying to steal the alky cookers in Little Italy and then to take over the Near North Side.

"I know all about it, John. I know that Angelo would like to succeed me as president. That would lead to trouble. I refuse to sanction the whole business. That's my decision."

As head of the *Unione Siciliano*, Mike Merlo was the Sicilian dictator of Chicago, and his word was law among his countrymen, including the Gennas, who knew well the penalty for refusing to follow an edict issued by the president of the *Unione*.

Mike Merlo had come to Chicago as a youth in 1889, and first came into prominence during the murderous political war between the

adherents of Alderman Tony D'Andrea and Alderman John Powers, at about the same time that Angelo Genna emerged as a skillful gunman.

Merlo finally brought peace to the bloody Nineteenth Ward, and from then on his rise began. He frowned on violence and the vendettas, although he was closely connected with many of the gang leaders in various business ventures. He was consulted on matters of policy and his decisions were final.

This afternoon Angelo, Vincenzo, Pete and Tony came back to the Lexington Hotel. Angelo heard out Torrio's words. He swore, pounded the table.

"Nobody's gonna do this to us, Torrio," Angelo shouted. "Mike Merlo is sick. He's lost his guts. Why is he giving that lousy Irish double-crosser protection? We're remembers of the *Unione*. Who's the Irish bum with? Nobody! Well, we've made up our minds. Me and my brothers. Either we get back the North Side, our trucks, and our alcohol or we don't sell you our alcohol and we also drop our agreement. We are no more with you. We are on our own! I don't care if Merlo is president of the *Unione*!"

"If you don't sell us your alcohol then who will you sell it to?" Torrio asked pointedly.

"To your customers, that's who!" Angelo cried. "We're gonna take over. Understand? I got three

thousand cops on my payroll. That's enough protection to do it!"

Torrio frowned. "You're excited, Angelo. You should stay calm. You should think things out more. This is no time for blind anger."

Angelo sneered. His anger twisted whatever good sense he had. He was making a stupid move, fighting the only real protection he had. If he believed that the cops on his payroll would give him protection against O'Bannion he was badly mistaken. O'Bannion had some real friends downtown. The cops who took the Gennas' payoffs didn't have any love for them, only for their money. That was what Angelo didn't understand. But Tony did, and he tried to cool his brother down.

"Let's wait a couple of days, Angelo," Tony said. "I'm sure Johnny will work this out satisfactorily." He turned to Torrio. "Isn't that right, Johnny?" Tony was trying desperately to avoid violence but was fighting a losing cause.

Angelo refused to buy it. "Don't be a fool, Tony!" he cried. "Torrio ain't gonna help nobody but himself. Let's get the hell outta here!"

SOMETHING HAPPENED in the next few days which should have warned Angelo how the wind blew but he ignored it. O'Bannion was a strong power in North Side politics. When State's Attorney Crowe stood for re-election early in November,

1924, it was O'Bannion who swung one of the doubtful river wards for him.

Busy with his gunmen on election day, O'Bannion spread terror among the polling places, slugging, kidnaping and threatening death, and when the ballots were counted Crowe, a Republican, had carried the ward, normally Democratic, by a plurality of three to one.

Several nights later, at a banquet at the Webster Hotel, Dion O'Bannion was presented with a \$2,000 platinum watch encrusted with diamonds and rubies as an appreciation of his prowess as a political buccaneer. This feast became a scandal when it developed that it had been attended by A. A. Sprague, Commissioner of Public Works, County Clerk Robert M. Schweitzer, once candidate for mayor, Chief of Detectives Michael Hughes, Assistant Chief William O'Connor, half a dozen police lieutenants, and many well known politicians in and out of office.

Mayor Dever ordered an investigation. Chief Hughes explained that he had been under the impression that the banquet was in honor, not of O'Bannion, but of someone else. When he saw gathered at the board a number of notorious characters whom he had thrown into cells a dozen times, he withdrew, he said, "almost at once," no doubt immensely indignant that he had been so outrageously put upon. That was a lot of baloney,

and everyone knew it, but Mayor Dever accepted the explanation.

A short term of quiet prevailed after the incident of the banquet, a quiet that Hymie Weiss didn't like. It was too quiet, too ominous.

Weiss said to O'Bannion, "Listen, Deanie, you're out with Torrio, out with Capone, out with the Gennas. Watch your step."

O'Bannion spread his hands disdainfully. "They're not so much, Hymie. They don't worry me a damn bit."

"I'm telling you to watch your step. I don't like this quiet."

"To hell with them Sicilians!" O'Bannion retorted with huge contempt.

To hell with them Sicilians.

The words achieved a sinister immortality as one of gangland's classic phrases. Only five words spoken carelessly, but those five words turned out to be O'Bannion's death warrant. The difference between a joke and a murder sometimes depends upon the point of view.

Mike Merlo died suddenly. The day before his funeral three men walked into O'Bannion's flower shop on North State Street and shot him dead.

Gangland exploded in violence. Hymie Weiss, who idolized O'Bannion, swore his own vendetta against the Gennas, and Torrio and Capone too. Weiss learned all the details of the murder conspiracy. The active participants were Angelo

and Mike Genna, John Scalisi, and Albert Anselmi.

Angelo, satisfied that he had won his war against O'Bannion and could now move into the Near North Side with impunity, gave his attention to romance. He courted Lucile Spingola, eighteen years old, a beauty and a belle.

The Spingolas were an established family of wealth and social position, and they frowned upon an alliance with the Gennas. But Lucile was firm. She loved Angelo, nine years her senior, and wouldn't give him up.

The wedding took place in a gorgeous church ceremony; the bride dreamlike in white silk, tulle, and orange blossoms; gunman Angelo immaculate in full dress. Three thousand guests of high and low degree sat down to the elaborate banquet in Carmen Hall. The wedding cake towered half to the ceiling and weighed two thousand pounds. Walls of the great chamber were banked and festooned with flowers. Happiness of the bride and groom was pledged in exhaustless quantities of the finest Italian wines, and dancing and merry-making kept up until dawn.

Angelo and his bride went to live in a \$400 a month suite in the Belmont Hotel at Sheridan Road and Belmont Avenue, overlooking Lake Michigan. They lived quietly and with a certain aloofness, wrapped up in each other and supremely happy.

They drove in the park and along the lakeside boulevards. They went to the theater. They were first nighters at every new opera performance. The great Italian opera stars were their friends, and Tito Ruffo, Tito Schipa, Campagnini, Tetrizzini and many others, celebrities in their own right, were often their guests at dinner.

Hymie Weiss fumed and waited in immense frustration. He wanted Angelo more than he wanted any one else. He wasn't idle while he waited to catch up with Angelo. Neither were the Gennas and their ace gunmen Scalisi and Anselmi.

The murders went on, on both sides. Bugs Moran and Schemer Drucci were wounded. Samoots Amatuna, the terrible Morici brothers, Nerone the Cavalier, Tropea the Scourge, and Baldelli the Eagle were killed. These were only the high spots of the desperate struggle for revenge and supremacy.

On this morning of May 26, 1925, Angelo and Lucile were having breakfast in their hotel apartment and discussing the new \$50,000 home they had recently selected in Oak Park and for which Angelo planned to pay in cash that morning. He drew a roll of bills from his pocket and counted the money on the table.

"I will drive over and close the deal, honey," he said to his wife. He bent over and kissed her. "When I come home you will be the owner of the finest home in Oak Park."

Angelo set off gayly, humming a tune. He stepped into his smart convertible in front of the hotel and, driving south in Sheridan Road and through Lincoln Park, turned into Ogden Avenue, a newly widened asphalt boulevard cutting diagonally through the city and connecting the North and West sides.

He was driving leisurely, had gone only a few blocks on Ogden Avenue when a large touring car with a winter top shot out of a side street and started swiftly in pursuit of him.

There were four men in the car. Three of them, according to information, were Hymie Weiss, Bugs Moran, and Schemer Drucci, two of whom Angelo and Scalisi had wounded. Moran and Drucci were armed with sawed-off shotguns. The fourth man, behind the wheel, was Frank Gusenberg.

Angelo saw the car as it curved into the boulevard behind him. He knew what it meant. He carried two revolvers in holsters at his belt, but this was no time for a fight with such heavy odds against him. Speed alone could save him. He knew that his only hope lay in outdistancing his pursuers. He bent over his wheel, threw his throttle wide open, and set off on a mad race with his life at stake.

He was soon streaking along the smooth highway at a speed variously estimated by witnesses at from seventy five to ninety miles an hour.

Gusenberg was a madman behind the wheel of the pursuing car. Shotguns began to bellow. Bullets crashed through Angelo's car and whined about him. He shot a quick glance over his shoulder. The gap between himself and his pursuers was not lessening. His enemies were grimly keeping pace with him. He pressed his foot harder on the accelerator. Speed! More speed!

Again the shotguns roared. And again. The lead slugs whined and whistled about Angelo like invisible hail. He snatched out one of his guns, struck it out the window, emptied it blindly toward the pursuing car. Aim was not possible. He could not use his weapon effectively and manage his wheel at the same time.

He tossed the gun on the seat beside him. For the third time the shotguns blared, and the slugs whispered death in his ears. Now the crash of the guns seemed just a little louder, just a little nearer. There was no hope for him. Desperation drove him into a frenzy. He didn't want to die.

A sudden inspiration thrilled him as the intersection of Hudson Avenue flashed into view. Here at last was a chance to escape, a desperate chance, but the one chance that might yet save his life. If he could swerve sharply westward into Hudson Avenue, his sudden change of direction might surprise his pursuers, and they might whizz on past the corner without time to slow

down. Then, before they could turn around to renew the chase, he would be out of sight and safe.

He slackened speed slightly, threw his wheel hard over, and went swinging dizzily around the dangerous turn on two wheels. But at the crucial peak of his curve his car skidded wildly across Hudson Avenue, crashed into a lamp-post with a thunderous boom, and came to an abrupt and fatal stop. Angelo had staked all on one breakneck venture and had lost. His last hope was gone. He was at the mercy of his foes.

The end of the hunt came unexpectedly. With Angelo helpless before them, the kill was easy. Hymie Weiss and Bugs Moran shoved their guns through the curtained car, aimed them at Angelo and pulled the triggers. Angelo slumped limply back against the cushions.

"That's for Deanie," Hymie Weiss yelled.

"And this is for me!" Bugs Moran cried.

Both men sent another volley into the front where Angelo Genna lay. But Angelo was not dead. He was rushed to the Evangelical Deaconess Hospital, not far away on Wisconsin Street. Of the six slugs that had struck him, one had fractured his spine.

"The shot was necessarily fatal," an attending surgeon said. "Only a physical superman could have retained consciousness a second after receiving such a wound."

The police came.

"You are about to die, Angelo," Sergeant Roy Hessler said. "Tell us who shot you."

A faint sneer lifted one corner of Angelo's lips. He shrugged weakly and remained silent, a Sicilian to the last.

Lucile rushed to his bedside and burst into hysterical weeping.

"Angelo!" she shrieked. "My darling Angelo! How could they do it?"

When she grew calmer she sat by his cot, holding his hand and stroking his brow. Her soothing touch brought him peace. The enemies who had brought him to his death were forgotten. Memories of old crimes did not disturb his serenity. As his life ebbed he kept his eager, hungry gaze fixed upon his wife. She grew dim before him and faded slowly out in the darkness.

He struggled hard for a last look at Lucile, whispered softly, "Sweetheart—" And then he died.

Angelo was buried in a silver-bronze casket which cost \$11,000. "A thousand dollars more than O'Bannion's cost," Mike Genna said with bitter pride.

But Angelo's funeral was nothing to compare with O'Bannion's in spectacular effects. The Gennas had many enemies and few friends. Only a handful of people attended the obsequies. The funeral procession was hardly a block long. Behind the hearse came the empty, bullet-riddled car, heavily draped with black

crepe, in which Angelo had been shot to death.

Then followed the bride, members of the Genna and Spingola families, relatives and friends, and several automobiles loaded with flowers brought up the rear. Angelo was laid to rest in unconsecrated ground in Mount Carmel Cemetery and, strangely enough, only a few paces from O'Bannion's grave. There Bloody Angelo, in his casket that cost a thousand dollars more than that of the man he helped to murder, sleeps forever.

The remaining Gennas set out to avenge their brother's murder. Mike and Pete Genna came to the Lexington Hotel again for a talk with Torrio and Capone.

"We're asking for your help," Mike said. "Weiss and Moran killed Angelo. There's no Mike Merlo now to stop you from giving us your help, Johnny. How about it?"

Torrio found some guts from somewhere and took a firm stand. "I'm sorry, Mike. This isn't our feud. You started it against my orders, against Merlo's orders. You started it so now you'll have to finish it."

Pete turned to Capone. "How about you, Al? We've done a lot of business together. We had a deal. Equal protection. You can give the word."

Capone shrugged. "Yeah, we had a deal once but Angelo broke it. Right here in this room. You were here at the time. He stopped selling

us your alky and tried to muscle in on our business. That ended it."

"You will remember that I tried to talk Angelo out of it. You do remember that, don't you?"

"Yeah, I remember it."

"Angelo's gone. Im talking for the rest of us. As old friends. If you let Weiss and Moran move in on us they'll move in on you next. You know that, don't you?"

"We'll worry about that when it happens, Pete. Right now we're minding our own business."

Mike lost his temper. The Genna anger swept away every iota of his control. He spat on the floor in front of Capone. "Italians! That's the answer. If you were a Sicilian you'd back us to the limit. Okay, we'll take care of ourselves. Come on, Pete, Let's go."

THE GENNAS DID a pretty good job of taking care of themselves for the next few weeks, killing the little guys in the gangs of Weiss and Moran, but no one of importance. The big guys, Weiss, Moran, Drucci, and the Gusenbergs were hunting them on the West Side while they were hunting on the North Side. Eventually they had to cross each other coming or going. During all this time Tony was trying to make peace, pleading with his brothers to stop the killings.

On June 13, a scarce three weeks after Angelo was slain, Mike Genna, Mike the Devil, was driving south on Western Avenue with John

Scalisi and Albert Anselmi. It was a Saturday morning. The day was warm and sunshiny after a hard early rain had left the asphalt pavement slippery and glistening. But the three men, moving at a leisurely pace, were not out to enjoy the beauty of the summer day.

Only an hour before they had had an exciting brush with Bugs Moran and Schemer Drucci at Sangamon and Congress Streets. This early morning battle had a twist to it, a cross and double-cross. Weiss, Moran, and Drucci, still on the trail of O'Bannion's killers, had conducted negotiations with a Sicilian hanger-on in the Genna mob. They paid him \$2,000 to put Scalisi and Anselmi on the spot.

This little Sicilian true-blood, however, hated the North-siders as much as did the Gennas. He agreed to have Scalisi and Anselmi standing on the corner of Sangamon and Congress streets at nine o'clock that morning when Moran and Drucci were to drift by in their car and slaughter them. But instead of putting Scalisi and Anselmi on the spot, the little Sicilian put Moran and Drucci on the spot.

While Moran and Drucci, sure of their victims, sat waiting in their car for Scalisi and Anselmi to appear at the corner to be killed, Mike Genna, Scalisi, and Anselmi flashed past them in Genna's car with a roaring fullcade of sawed-off shotguns. Moran and Drucci fired back,

and then sped away from the danger zone.

At this particular moment, a police squad car from central detective headquarters was touring the West Side district. At Western Avenue and 47th Street, Detective Michael J. Conway caught sight of the Genna car. He yelled to Detectives William Sweeney, Charles Walsh, and Harold Olson, "That's Genna!"

The chase went on for a dozen blocks. At 59th Street a loaded truck swung into Western Avenue. To avoid a collision, Genna pulled sharply to one side. The car skidded, spun twice around, crashed with splintering violence into a telephone pole, and stopped dead, facing north. The police car, only a half block behind, came up with a sliding rush, its brakes grinding, and halted in the middle of the street directly opposite the broadside one.

The four detectives came piling out of the car, guns drawn.

Mike Genna, Anselmi, and Scalisi scrambled out of their car with sawed-off shotguns cocked in their hands, their fingers on the triggers.

"Drop your guns!" Detective Walsh ordered.

His answer was a charge of buckshot that struck him in the chest, riddling him, tearing away the left side of his face. He threw one hand high above his head, twisted half around, rose on his toes as if staggered by a violent wind, and pitched

a full length to the pavement. Scalisi had killed him.

As Walsh fell, Scalisi moved the muzzle of his gun slightly to one side and pulled the trigger of his second barrel. Again a spurt of flame shot out. This time it was Detective Olson. The lead slugs crashed into his head, throat and upper breast, shattering his skull and jaw bone, turning his face as if by devil's necromancy from blond Scandinavian ruggedness into scrambled, blood-red pulp. His tall, raw-boned, powerful body collapsed with strange suddenness, as if crushed to the ground by a pile-driver blow on the top of his head. He crouched for a moment in a contorted huddle, and toppled over on his side with wide-flung arms. He was dead before he hit the ground.

Detectives Conway and Sweeney fired back. Mike Genna and Anselmi returned the fire. Genna's shot struck Conway. The detective staggered forward and plunged headlong to the ground, his gun flying from his hand and sliding almost to Genna's feet. Only Sweeney was left to battle the three gunmen.

Sweeney dodged behind a car and over the hood. His bullets drove the three hoods for shelter. And then the gunfire stopped. Sweeney reloaded his gun, saw Olson's gun on the ground and picked it up.

The furious uproar of the bat-

tle had aroused the neighborhood. Workmen poured into the streets by the hundreds from shops, garages, factories. Up and down Western Avenue the sidewalks were packed with excited crowds. Windows and doorways of near-by homes were filled with women and children peering eagerly. Factory whistles began to boom an alarm. Sirens of automobiles parked at a safe distance set up a mad shrieking. Gongs of street cars, halted at the corners, filled the air with brazen clamors. Men went scurrying for telephones. Riot calls for police reinforcements were turned in.

Genna, Scalisi, and Anselmi separated. They walked swiftly from the scene. Their ammunition was exhausted. They were at the mercy of the cops and a possible mob.

Sweeney caught up with Mike Genna. He fired as he chased Genna down the street. A slug cut an artery in Genna's left leg. He hobbled to a house, saw a window leading to a basement, jerked it open and crawled in.

Sweeney was joined by Policeman John Oakey and Policeman Albert Rickert. They went after Mike Genna. They found him huddled in a corner, bleeding to death. And that's how he died. He was twenty-five years old and the youngest of the six Gennas.

Vincenzo Genna, seeing the handwriting on the walls, left Chicago and went to Sicily. Shortly afterward he was charged with the

theft of the jewels of the Madonna di Trapani in his native province, tried, convicted, and sentenced to two years in prison. He lived later in Rome in a luxurious apartment in the Via Gianbattista Vico near the Porto del Popolo, scattered his money, and cut a swath in gambling palaces and fashionable amusement gardens.

After five years abroad he returned quietly to Chicago, when Genna murders and murdered Gennas had been forgotten, and settled down—or at least so he announced—to the peaceful business of selling olive oil and cheese.

Shortly after Vincenzo Genna left Chicago, Tony Genna drove up to the grocery store of Charles and Vito Cutilla at Grand Avenue and Curtis Street on July 8, 1925.

"Anyone been in looking for me?" Tony asked, walking into the store.

"No, not that I know of," Charles Cutilla said. "Nobody's been in."

Tony looked at his watch. It was ten-thirty in the morning. "I thought maybe they'd be here by now," he said. "I had a phone call. I guess they'll come in a little while. Fine day."

"Yes," Cutilla replied. "A little hot. A good rain would help things."

Tony chatted casually with Cutilla. He knew them both well. After a while he stepped out on the sidewalk. He waited for about five minutes for the men with whom he

had the appointment. An auto stopped on the opposite side of Curtis Street. Two men got out. Seeing Tony on the opposite corner, they waved their hands in greeting. Both were smiling broadly as they walked across the street to meet him.

"Hello, Tony," the taller man said. "How are you?" He seemed bubbling over with cordiality and in such a cheerful mood that he was almost laughing.

Tony stepped forward and took the outstretched hand. These were friends. "Glad to see you. How's everything?" How's everything? Just dead, that was all.

As the taller man held Tony's hand in a lingering grasp, still with an air of disarming friendliness, his companion drew a pistol from his pocket and shot Tony five times. Tony fell without a word, a look of deep puzzlement on his face. Why him? He had never hurt anyone.

He was rushed to the County Hospital. Sam and Pete Genna, Mrs. Angelo Genna, and several of her sisters hurried to his bedside. The police also arrived.

"Who did it, Tony?" Sam asked.

True to his Sicilian tradition, Tony remained silent.

"Tell us, Tony," Sam pleaded.

Tony shook his head sorrowfully. This had been so senseless.

"You love your brothers, don't you?" Sam persisted.

"Yes, Sam. I love you all. I love u—all."

"You'd save our lives if you uld? You'd save them?"

"Yes, Sam. I—wish—I wish I uld."

"Then for the sake of your others, for the sake of our wives d children, tell this secret for all r sakes. I beg you, Tony. Tell us! ase tell us!"

Tony shook his head feebly. "No. can't. I can't tell you." He died h the secret of his killers.

Fear and desperation, the kind t had driven Angelo Genna when tried to elude his killers, now ve Sam and Pete. And they went their own. Anselmi and Sacalisi l been arrested and were being ed for trial. Torrio and Capone ed to help them. They scoured

Sicilian underworld for gunmen, nd ten men willing to kill for y. They sent word to Sicily. A f dozen men came to Chicago. ed killers. The two mobs, Weiss l Moran against the Gennas or at remained of them, renewed ir attacks.

Meanwhile, Scalisi and Anselmi t to trial on October 5th for the rder of Detective Olson, backed a defense fund of \$100,000. To fund the Gennas, Capone, rich nblers, resort keepers, bootleg-s, and gang leaders had made nerous contributions. Large ounts had also been donated by ilians, who were led to believe the

good name of the Sicilian colony was at stake.

Gangland prefaced the trial by attempts at intimidation. Detective Sweeney, hero of the battle and star witness for the state, was threatened with death, and his home was wrecked by a dynamite bomb with a loss of \$7,500 to his father, who was the owner of the house. Other witnesses for the prosecution were menaced by telephone and mail. An unidentified gangster fired two shots into the state's attorney's office. The trial was hardly under way when the families of two jurymen received threatening letters marked with skull and crossbones, and a police guard was stationed at their homes.

Many eyes sought out the two Sicilian murderers curiously, as if half expecting to find them devil-like creatures with horns and cloven hoofs. But they sat placidly among their lawyers, little in their appearance to distinguish them from ordinary men seen every day on the street.

Both were of robust type. Scalisi had a pleasant, intelligent face, with a clear skin and sparkling dark eyes—a rather proud, handsome face, but nothing about it to suggest the desperate criminal and heartless killer.

Anselmi's hard, cold, expressionless visage, wide, bold eyes and heavy jaws gave some vague hint of his dangerous character. In Sicily he had been a chief of brigands and adventured romantically, but he was

plainly possessed of the look to be seen in the face of a stolid, rough-hewn clodhopper who might have lived peacefully all his life in a hut on the slopes of Stromboli and plowed some small farm with a team of oxen.

The climax of the trial came when Attorney O'Donnell, a tall, fiery, white-haired veteran of the bar, rose before the jury and waved a little black book.

"I have here," he shouted, "a book taken from the dead body of Mike Genna. It contains a list of star numbers of policemen on the payroll of the Gennas. I offer to prove that the Gennas have paid \$8,000 a month to the police for protection for the last three years, or a total of nearly \$300,000. Four hundred policemen called at Genna headquarters on Taylor Street every month to receive their pay.

"Most of them were from the Maxwell Street station. Two squads came from the Central Detective Bureau and one from the state's attorney's office. Neighbors called Genna headquarters 'the police station.' In the list is the star number of a captain who received \$800 a month. In addition to their graft money, many policemen bought moonshine whiskey from the Gennas at discount prices and bootlegged it themselves.

"Every month a list of star numbers was sent from Maxwell Street to the Gennas, who ran it off on an adding machine and then destroyed

the original police memorandum. the policemen were paid, their star numbers—the police badge is a star—were checked off. This system was adopted because outside cops were cutting in on the easy graft by falsely representing themselves attached to Maxwell Street. Many 'outlaw' stills were claiming immunity on the pretense that they were Genna stills, and to protect the police, the Gennas sent to Maxwell Street officials a list giving the location of all the bona-fide alcohol cookeries.

"If the Gennas got wind of an attack on their trucks they notified the Central Detective Bureau, and a squad car was sent to convey the Genna trucks, loaded with alcohol, through the danger zones. If a police raid were planned, as for effect to come necessary now and then, the Gennas were given twenty-four hours' advance notice. As a result the raiders found nothing incriminating, and as soon as they had gone the still started up again. The business of the Gennas was conducted as openly as a department store on State Street, and not a wheel could have turned except under the protection and by the permission of the police."

State's Attorney Crowe rose and made a loud objection to the statements by O'Donnell.

"This is a dastardly attempt to blacken the reputation of the police department!" he declared. He turned to O'Donnell. "What will you

r. O'Donnell, if Mayor Dever and chief of Police Morgan Collins demand that your statements be backed by proof?"

"Mayor Dever and Chief Collins," answered O'Donnell, "can both go to hell!"

"I will rule out this line of evidence," said Judge William V. others, "as irrelevant and having bearing on the murder charge." "I had expected, your honor," retorted O'Donnell, "to prove by this evidence the theory of self-defense on which our case rests."

"Ruled out!" repeated Judge others.

"Then," flashed O'Donnell, "I will take the book and the evidence Uncle Sam."

Before the Justice Department got hold of the book, however, it was mysteriously lost. But an affidavit sworn to by the paymaster of the Kennas was at this time in the hands

United States District Attorney Jensen and not only supported all of the charges made by O'Donnell but added other details regarding the wholesale bribery of the police.

Mayor Dever and Chief Collins made no demand on O'Donnell for proof, and Chief Collins, to the surprise of the public, admitted the charges were true.

"I am convinced," said Chief Collins, "there were grafting cops attached to the Maxwell Street station, and one hundred and seventy are to be transferred immediately."

The trial proceeded with one sen-

sational charge after another. Attorney O'Donnell was discovered to have given a bottle of whiskey to court attaches. This was looked upon as a great scandal, and a tremendous fuss was made about it. The clerk of the court and three bailiffs were discharged. Called before the bench and severely reprimanded, the lawyer attempted to laugh it off, explaining that it was excellent whisky and his motives were purely convivial.

On November 11th the jury found Scalisi and Anselmi guilty of manslaughter and fixed their punishment at fourteen years in the penitentiary. Both defendants smiled, happy that they had escaped the gallows. Judge Brothers announced they would be put on trial within five days for the murder of Detective Walsh.

But with one delay after another, Scalisi and Anselmi were not brought to trial until February 7th for the murder of Walsh. On March 18th the jury brought in a verdict of acquittal.

Taken back to jail, the two men leaped for joy, danced about each other, embraced many times. On May 3rd they were taken to Joliet Prison to begin their sentence of fourteen years for the killing of Olson. On December 23rd the Illinois Supreme Court granted them a new trial in the Olson case. If they were guilty of murder, according to the Supreme Court, their fourteen-year sentence was "but a mockery of

justice," and if they were not guilty of murder they should have been freed. In January 1927, the prisoners were released on bond.

At their second trial in June for the Olson killing they were acquitted. Two years after the murder of the two police officers, Scalisi and Anselmi were free men. This was Chicago in the days of Capone.

The killings in the feud between the remaining Gennas and the Weiss-Moran mobs continued while the Genna ace gunmen were in stir but increased in tempo as soon as they got out.

The two gangs terrorized Chicago with their wild shooting affrays. They were careless of the lives of legitimate citizens who were in the streets when they shot it out with each other. The killings on both sides were macabre. The cops could do nothing, taking the attitude that sooner or later both sides would eliminate each other. The murders were committed with the ruthless

precision of a deadly automaton. had to end in but one way.

Weiss and Moran caught up with Sam and Pete Genna and riddled them with shotgun slugs. Vincenzo Genna was murdered. And then Capone, after he took over the mob when Torrio fled the city, personally killed Anselmi and Scalisi because they had tried to muscle in on him with no less an idea than taking over the mob.

Weiss and Moran, drunk with power after eliminating the Gennas, went after Capone. It was their fatal mistake. Capone set up Weiss and cut him in half with a volley of machine gun slugs. Then came the bloody St. Valentine's Day Massacre and the end of Bugs Moran.

Thus ended too the history of the Gennas, their feuds, their terror, their mayhem, and their countless killings. They were a strange family and they helped build the addendum that to live by the gun is to die by the gun. It will always be like that.

Coming Soon:

Another TRUE CRIME STORY masterpiece

by DAVID MAZROFF



Belle

*He could get away with murder,
that guy. Until a lady deer—
and a melon—got in his way.*

by M. G. OGAN

UNTIL HE'D murdered Belle, Boo Randall was Sheriff Snow's problem, but after that I had to get Boo's trail, because I'm the game warden in northern Jackson County.

Boo used to keep a grubby country store on Wiggs Road near the Seven Runs swamp, a cover-up for his bootlegging activity in partnership with Charlie Gort.

Charlie stilled the white lightning; Boo sold it. He had the swamp man's cunning. Sheriff Snow couldn't nail him bootlegging.

He couldn't get him for Murder One, or even manslaughter, when Boo fired both barrels of his cut-off 12-gauge into Charlie's gut — there were no witnesses, and Boo claimed it was a holdup attempt.

A .45 "hawgleg" on the blood-soaked floor beside Charlie, with two shells discharged, seemed to corroborate Boo's yarn, but everyone in and around the Seven Runs knew Boo and Charlie had fallen out about money. A jury of townspeople set him free to go and sin again. Which Boo did within the year.

Gangling, with tiger-yellow eyes set in deep eye sockets, with the carriage and walk inherited from an Indian ancestor, Boo attracted a certain kind of woman. One such woman was the young wife of an older tenant farmer, Bill Radley.

Boo's excuse for slaying Bill with his 12-gauge was that the man had found out about his wife's adultery and had charged into the store to split his skull with a double-bitt axe.

There was an axe, all right, but this time there was a witness, too, Bill's wife, sitting in their dusty truck outside the store. She admitted her indiscretion between sobs, but stated that it wasn't known to her husband, and that he'd simply gone

into Boo's store to return the axe because it was defective.

Sheriff Snow and the County Prosecutor worked hard to get Boo sent away for five years on a manslaughter rap.

Boo ratted on a cellmate, for stalling a wholesale prison break and got out on parole after serving two years, but his store had burned down in the meantime—some say by relatives of Charlie Gort; other say Bill Radley kin.

Operating from his palmetto overgrown acre next to Shelton Zeagler's quarter section of fine farmland, Boo turned professional deer poacher. He'd made prison connections that put him in touch with crooked meat dealers over the state line.

The occasional hunter who killed out of season is easy to catch, and they seldom repeat after losing the meat and \$500, with a mandatory prison term if they're repeat offenders. The pro deer killer is something else again. There's twenty square miles of Seven Runs swamp; few natives will go in there without a guide.

Getting in is easy, but getting out. *Like forget it*, as the kids say. Mud grows on all sides of the hundred-year-old cypress in there; the Seven Runs shift channels each spring freshet. It's as dark as dusk in the Seven Runs at high noon of the brightest day.

I was born deep in the Seven Runs, on a houseboat—my father

s a muskrat trapper. Boo was in there too.

The amateur you can catch by angulating the sound of his rifle. Natives don't like their deer led out of season and call me. When I have the direction of the and reported from two or three the farmers living above Seven runs, I charge in with my four-wheel drive Jeep, and usually catch a fool trying to lug his prey out.

Boo built a silencer for his Winchester .30-.30, an ingenious device made from a length of pipe and brass wool.

The pro dresses out his deer on a spot, and wraps the "leavings" in plastic sheeting so circling buzzards won't bring a game warden to the scene of the crime.

Boo's deep-freeze was ingenious, too. He had an old cyclone cellar in his place. He sodded it over, on the door, installed a small generator operated by gasoline to run a freezing unit, and disguised the haust with a wisteria vine. Considerates ran the frozen venison over the state line on back roads.

Sheriff Snow and I went out to Boo's place three times with search warrants. We couldn't even find his place and ammo; he was stashing them somewhere in the Seven Runs. Boo's fatal mistake was the night he killed the deer Shelton Zeagler's. He had raised from a fawn when a careless motorist killed her mother. She was a yearling, with a brass bell around her neck; every

legitimate hunter in the area knew about Belle. They shot their share of other hunters in season by mistake, but never Belle.

Belle had jumped the fence around Shelton's wood lot and wandered off into the Seven Runs. Shelton followed her tracks at sundown the next morning, and found the filled plastic bags, with Belle's brass bell in the mud beside them. He brought the bell to me.

Zeaglers have always lived in Jackson County on the same land.

Shelton is a brawny man—soft-spoken always, but he's known to cover the ground he stands on. He's slow to anger, but was white with rage that morning in my home, which is my office.

"Something has to be done about Boo, Sam," he said. "I know you've tried; I know Sheriff Snow has tried, but Belle was my kid's pet, almost a member of the family."

"I've tried tracking Boo, Shelton. He's got eyes in the back of his head. You know how often we've shaken down his place."

Shelton nodded his graying head. "I know."

"If we can catch one of those night-runners with a load of venison, how do we trace it back to Boo? He doesn't buy his wrappings here in town."

"I know," Shelton said. "Boo's table has been graced by my fruit and vegetables for more years than I like to think about. If I can't

catch him raiding my garden, or stealing my watermelons—”

Suddenly there was a steely glint in Shelton's blue eyes. He finished his coffee, thanked my wife for her hospitality, and left.

It was quite by accident that I found out, later that day, that Shelton had bought a ball of yarn, and a single steel knitting needle. It was one of those odd things you file in the “forget until” file.

I met him in Avery Feed & Seed buying a gallon of that new weed killer, Hydra X.

“I've had a lot of trouble with Johnson grass,” Shelton explained. “This stuff will get it before it starts.”

I tried a gallon myself, and it worked.

“Be sure to keep that away from your kids,” the clerk warned me. “It's tasteless, but deadly.”

A covey of buzzards circling over Boo's shack late in August reminded me I hadn't seen him grouching around his place lately. The smell from the front porch told me why. Sheriff Snow brought out Doc Lundon, and we took Boo from his bed, wrapped him in one of his own plastic sheets, and drove down into the Seven Runs for the autopsy.

It was a grisly affair. Sheriff Snow and I had to “ride shotgun,” driving off buzzards and vultures, until Doc had carved out the vital organs he'd need.

The three of us gave him a decent burial down there in the swamp, but put up no marker.

Cause of death?

“The fool must have drunk half a gallon of that new weed killer,” Doc Lundon reported. “Watermelon rinds scattered all around. So melons, too—the best in Shelton patch, I'd bet.”

The verdict was “probable suicide.” Some thought Boo might have thought the weed killer was some of his stumphole whisky, but they were townspeople.

It didn't come up at the inquest. Where was the empty Hydra bottle?

It was the next week I dropped by Shelton's place for a chat. I remembered something that I counted for the ball of yarn and a steel knitting needle.

Shelton's father cured the two of us of raiding his patch for watermelons he'd marked with his X. He used them as seed for next year's crop—by puncturing the growing melons with a knitting needle, inserting a yarn wick and putting the other end of the yarn in a bottle of Ipacac. We were two of the sick kids in Jackson County!

“How's it going?” I asked Shelton.

“Just fine lately.” He grinned. “My kids are bottle-feeding another orphan fawn. Why not sit a spell and have supper with us?”

“I suppose Della will serve watermelon for dessert?”

Shelton nodded. “A big one cooling right now.”

“Shel, another time?” I said.

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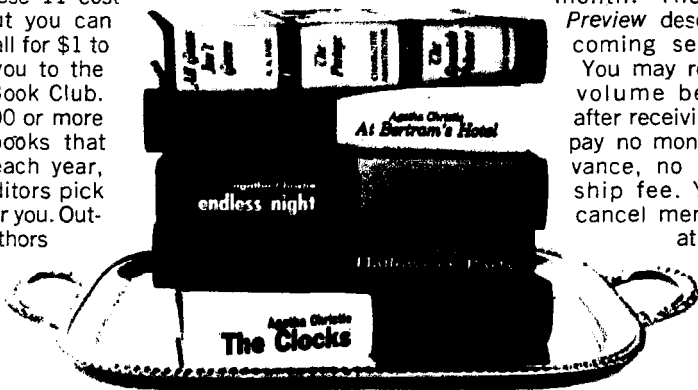
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